

THE INDEPENDENT

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INSIDE TODAY'S SECTION TWO



Can you trust new Labour?

Andrew Marr starts a week-long series

Should you give up work for your children?

Family Life

Bill Clinton and his women

Cover story



Girls sweep past boys in exams race

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Girls are doing as well or better than boys in every GCSE subject and are catching up fast at A-level, according to the first major study to examine exam trends for the two sexes over the past decade.

The 193-page report from the Equal Opportunities Commission found that boys failed to improve their GCSE performance as much as girls over the period and their performance lagged well behind in English, humanities, arts, modern languages and technology.

Even in the traditional male strongholds of maths and physics, girls' performance is now matching boys at both GCSE and A-level.

The report from Cambridge and South Bank universities offers the most comprehensive evidence so far of the extent to which boys are falling behind girls. Recently, Chris Woodhead, the Chief Inspector of Schools, highlighted the underachievement of white working-class boys.

The researchers argue that cultural changes have led to higher expectations of girls while the disappearance of many traditional working-class jobs has demotivated some boys. At A-level, boys still do better in English, modern languages, history, technology and chemistry but



the gap is narrowing. Girls do better in biology, social studies and art and design. Boys also get more vocational qualifications than girls.

Madeleine Arnot, one of the authors, said it was misleading to talk about boys' underachievement. "We have a success story here. This is an excellent sign of the work schools have done to improve girls' performance so that they are now catching up."

The researchers looked at girls' and boys' performance in relation to their proportion of entry to exams. The comparisons are based on figures for those getting five or more A-C grades at GCSE and of A and B grades at A-level.

The year-long study of exam results between 1985 and 1994 examined the effect of recent education reforms on equal opportunities. It found that the improvement in girls' performance predated the start of the national curriculum and the 1988 Education Reform Act.

However, the national curriculum has helped to ensure that, at 16, girls are now taking "male" subjects, such as science, which they shunned in the past. Boys predominate only in chemistry and economics; girls only in social studies.

However, the report emphasises that girls still have some way to go. At A-level they still avoid traditionally male-dominated subjects such as physics: boys now account for an even higher proportion of entries in physics and technology than they did 10 years ago.

Girls do slightly better than boys at physics, probably because they are such a small, selective group. The proportion of girls taking chemistry and maths also lags well behind that for boys.

Yet more boys are now taking "female" subjects such as English and modern languages at A-level.

Young men under 21 also achieve more vocational qualifications and young women opt mainly for traditional female courses such as hairdressing and beauty and care.

Dentists' stampede out of NHS to be halted

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

The Government is planning moves to halt the stampede of dentists out of the National Health Service.

Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, is preparing legislation which would bring far-reaching changes to the work of Britain's 17,000 dentists.

The Bill, which could be in the next Queen's Speech, would give local health authorities powers to "buy" health care from dentists for NHS patients for the first time.

The main aim is to allow health authorities to tackle evidence of worsening dental health, particularly for children in some areas, by setting local targets.

It would end the system of "demand-led" care under which dentists respond to patient demand and are then paid a fee for their services. The new system is likely to be coupled with tighter controls on the cost of treatment which can be provided on the NHS, ruling out more expensive courses of treatment or some types of dentures. There could also be clearly defined

catchment areas in which patients would have to live.

Mr Dorrell plans a series of pilot schemes in seven or eight towns.

However, the move could mean that some patients whose dentists withdrew from providing care on the NHS could have their care restored. Local authorities would purchase the care directly from the dentists. Ministers believe this will help them to defend their record on the health service more effectively at the general election.

The collapse of NHS dental care in many areas came after the Government cut fees for dentists by 7 per cent in 1990. The cut provoked an exodus as dentists moved to the private sector because they felt it was not worth working for the NHS.

In some areas, particularly the Home Counties, many practices ceased offering NHS care. In Berkshire, for example, demand dropped by 30 per cent since 1990.

That has led to accusations of a two-tier dental service, in which some poorer families may have to go without regular check-ups.

Dentists who remained on

the NHS lists are concentrated in poorer areas. In Gateshead, South Tyneside, the fees paid to dentists on the NHS have gone up 130 per cent since 1990.

Areas such as the North-east, where dentists have stayed with the NHS, may see their budgets held down under the change from demand-led care to purchasing by health authorities.

One dentist's leader said: "They cannot pay for the whole of the health care. At some stage, some government is going to have the courage to say we cannot do everything."

One of the things suggested by the Commons select committee on health was that there should be a basic level of service but you have to pay for bits on top of that."

Ministers are still drawing up the Government's list of legislation for the Queen's Speech. They are looking for a package to show the Government has not run out of ideas in the approach to a general election.

A spokesman for the Association of British Dentists said: "We are waiting to hear what the Government says, but we have a problem over how you relate it to the demand-led process."



Storming home: Liz McColgan runs up the Mall to victory in the London Marathon yesterday. Photograph: David Ashdown

And they told her she would never run again...

MIKE ROWBOTTOM
Athletics Correspondent

Liz McColgan stormed home to win the Flora London Marathon yesterday, just over two years after being told by a medical specialist that she would never run again.

The 31-year-old from Dundee, who underwent two knee operations either side of Christmas 1993, received huge support in what was the hottest race in the London Marathon's 16-year history, with temperatures rising towards 80F.

About 3,000 runners were treated for the effects of heat.

After becoming the first British woman to win in London since Veronique Marot seven years ago, McColgan paid tribute to her coach, Norway's former world marathon champion Grete Waitz.

McColgan's victory confirmed that she is back to the kind of form which brought her the world 10,000-metres title five years ago, and provided ideal preparation for her Olympic challenge this summer.

"My rivals are going to have to do something extra special if they are going to prevent me from coming back from Atlanta with gold," she said.

"Things happen to you for a reason. I believe the problems I have faced in the last three years have been a test and I am a better, stronger person for coming through it. I always knew in myself that I could make it back."

McColgan took the lead with six of the 26 miles remaining after catching Anita Haakenstad of Norway, whose lone run threatened the upset the formbook in a race involving some of the world's fastest runners.

The men's race was won by Dionicio Ceron of Mexico who completed hat trick of London wins in the men's race. Paul Evans, in third place, was the first male Briton home.

Paedophiles 'control children's homes'

ROGER DOBSON and
REBECCA FOWLER

The senior police officer leading Britain's biggest ever investigation into sexual abuse in children's homes has warned that paedophiles are still at large at senior levels in the social services.

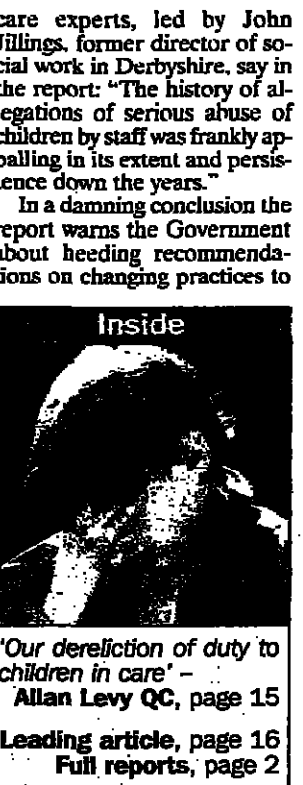
Detective Inspector Terence Oates expects to see 14 care workers go on trial in Cheshire where hundreds of children were allegedly abused during the Seventies and Eighties. But he fears many of the paedophiles who targeted homes for jobs have continued to work undetected.

His concerns coincide with the findings of the suppressed inquiry into widespread abuses in Clwyd, which addresses allegations that paedophiles worked in groups and set up systemised abuse in homes. It says: "It is clear that sex offenders can and do network."

DI Oates, who has been investigating allegations of abuse by paedophiles working in Cheshire homes for two years, said: "There is evidence some of them have risen fairly high up in social services, and so when allegations started to come in they were in the ideal position to stop it in its tracks."

The unpublished 300-page report into abuse in Clwyd involves seven homes where more than 100 children were abused. At least 12 died in adulthood in circumstances related to their traumatic experiences in care.

The inquiry team of child



Our dereliction of duty to children in care - Allan Levy QC, page 15

care experts, led by John Jillings, former director of social work in Derbyshire, say in the report: "The history of allegations of serious abuse of children by staff was frankly appalling in its extent and persistence down the years."

In a damning conclusion the report warns the Government about heading recommendations on changing practices to

proved inspection and registration of children's homes; the creation of a central index of people with convictions against children; and improved training.

Allan Levy QC, the authority on child abuse who co-wrote the inquiry into pin-down abuses in Staffordshire in 1991, said: "It is still a question of a child in care may well be a child in danger... One of the pin-down inquiry recommendations was that a statutory list of offenders should be set up. Five years have gone by and nothing has happened."

Despite recommendations from a series of inquiries, it is still possible for an applicant with no experience to find work in a residential home with children. The lack of a central register of trained workers also makes it impossible for employers to check references.

Daphne Statham, director of the National Institute for Social Work, which is campaigning for a central regulatory body to oversee workers, has a collection of advertisements that read: "Wanted: Person to work in children's home. No experience required."

Ms Statham said: "Each time there's a scandal it comes up again, but then people forget about it. These children aren't listened to, while there are still people in these jobs being shifted around the system to avoid trouble. Staff are also moving between agencies, getting found out, nothing being done about it, and moving on to the next job."

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CHILD ABUSE SCANDAL

'The Bryn Estyn home wasn't fit for children. It has made my life since leaving a complete misery'

The full horror of young lives blighted, terrorised, and in some cases destroyed by years of sexual and physical abuse in children's homes is revealed in the report into one of Britain's biggest child abuse scandals.

For many of the young children, their lives were a living nightmare, the report says. Even when in desperation they ran away to escape the abuse, their stories were not believed and they were almost always returned to their abusers.

The children placed in residential homes in Clwyd, North Wales, in the 1970s and 1980s, were not, for the most part, delinquents, juvenile criminals, or uncontrollable. They were the innocent victims of domestic problems, sometimes four and five years old, who had been

The unpublished Clwyd report reveals the full horror of life in residential care, writes Roger Dobson

abused in their own families, or youngsters who had simply been abandoned.

What they needed was love and protection. But the world they went into, as described in the report, was no safe haven. It was a brutal, abusive regime.

The history of allegations of serious abuse of children by staff was frankly appalling in its extent and persistence down the years, says the report by three leading and independent child care specialists - which has so far not been published.

Most damning of all is the list of 12 young men who have died and whose deaths were linked to their lives in care.

Most of these deaths were

not when the abuse was occurring, the report shows, but took place around the time of the investigation and trials of the men found guilty of abusing children in Clwyd.

The list reveals that nine of the 12 died after the police investigation and in some cases after men had been charged. Some of the young men who died had been involved in making statements or giving evidence.

The team says: "We are of the opinion that perhaps insufficient thought has been given to the psychological or psychiatric stress of appearing in court as a witness in high-profile cases."

The stark list of those who

have died appears on one page of the 300-page report and the inquiry team says that even this list "is not comprehensive".

R1: Fell to his death from a railway bridge. Former resident of Bryn Alyn Home.

R2: May, 1978, committed suicide aged 16 by taking an overdose of pain killing tablets. Former resident of Bryn Alyn.

R3: March 1985, was found dead in a flat in which he was living in poverty, aged 21. Former resident of Little Acton Assessment Centre.

R4: April 1992, died in a fire aged 32 in premises in which he lived in Sussex. The inquest verdict - unlawful killing. Former resident of Bryn Alyn.

R5: June 1992, found dead aged 18 in a bed-sitter. Cause of death, acute respiratory failure due to solvent abuse. Former resident of Bryn Alyn.

R6: January, 1994, committed suicide by hanging, aged 27. R7: April, 1994, died aged 27 from alcohol abuse. Allegations that he had been the subject of a serious sexual offence. Former Bryn Estyn resident.

R8: July 1994, found dead in a car, aged 18. Former foster child in Clwyd where he allegedly suffered from maltreatment.

R9: November, 1994, committed suicide aged 16 by hanging.

R10: February, 1995, died

from and apparent heroin overdose aged 37. Former resident of Bryn Alyn where it was alleged he had been sexually abused.

R11: February, 1995, hanged himself aged 31. Allegations of sexual abuse against care workers.

R12: May, 1995, found hanging aged 27. Allegations that he had been sexually abused by a senior care worker. Former resident of Bryn Estyn.

The inquiry team members said they had interviewed some former residents who said their experience in the homes was positive "but on the whole, those interviews which we undertook and the statements

which we read, gave a clear indication that the residential care experience for a significant number of young people was little short of a living nightmare."

The inquiry team interviewed a number of young people as well as reading statements made earlier. One young man, now in his twenties, who spent some time at the Bryn Estyn home, told the team: "Bryn Estyn wasn't fit for children. It has made my life since leaving a complete misery. I spent some time in hospital because of suicide attempts. It has made me unable to form a loving relationship."

Another said: "It scares me

now looking at kids of that age. I look at my kids and think, how could somebody do what they did. But I know it is true."

Commenting on visits from headquarters officials to homes, one young man said: "It was always suits, always men. We were told to smile. It would have been nice if it had been a woman."

Another said: "Bryn Estyn was the Colditz of residential care. If you ever rocked the boat you were left alone."

Yet another said: "Years later I was talking to a cousin who was at the same home as me. I didn't know he was my cousin then. He said, 'I remember you, you were the boy with no shoes'. They wouldn't let me have shoes because of running away."

Paedophiles were 'free to perpetrate evil'

ROGER DOBSON

The widespread sexual abuse of hundreds of children in care by workers may remain hidden for decades, because the victims have been convinced by paedophiles that they will never be believed, according to a senior police officer leading the inquiry into child abuse in Cheshire.

Detective Inspector Terrence Oates described the insidious methods used by the paedophiles who found jobs in children's homes in the area. They made their victims feel completely isolated to ensure their credibility was undermined, so avoiding exposure.

"It is part and parcel of paedophile activity to convince the boy that he is the only one and that if he does tell anyone, they won't believe him, because look at who he is compared to who the perpetrator is," DI Oates said.

The allegations are only emerging now, according to DI Oates, because victims have finally found the confidence to come forward following a host of prominent scandals across the country, including Staffordshire, Leicestershire and London.

An unprecedented number of people have been interviewed in the Cheshire investigation, covering alleged abuse in the Seventies and Eighties. The police have traced 1,847 out of the 2,331 former residents at the homes and have taken 2,000 statements.

The children were already in care because of traumatic circumstances, and in a large num-

ber of cases they had been placed there because they had suffered sexual or physical abuse within their families.

But many of them were also difficult to handle because of their experiences, and their accusations were not believed.

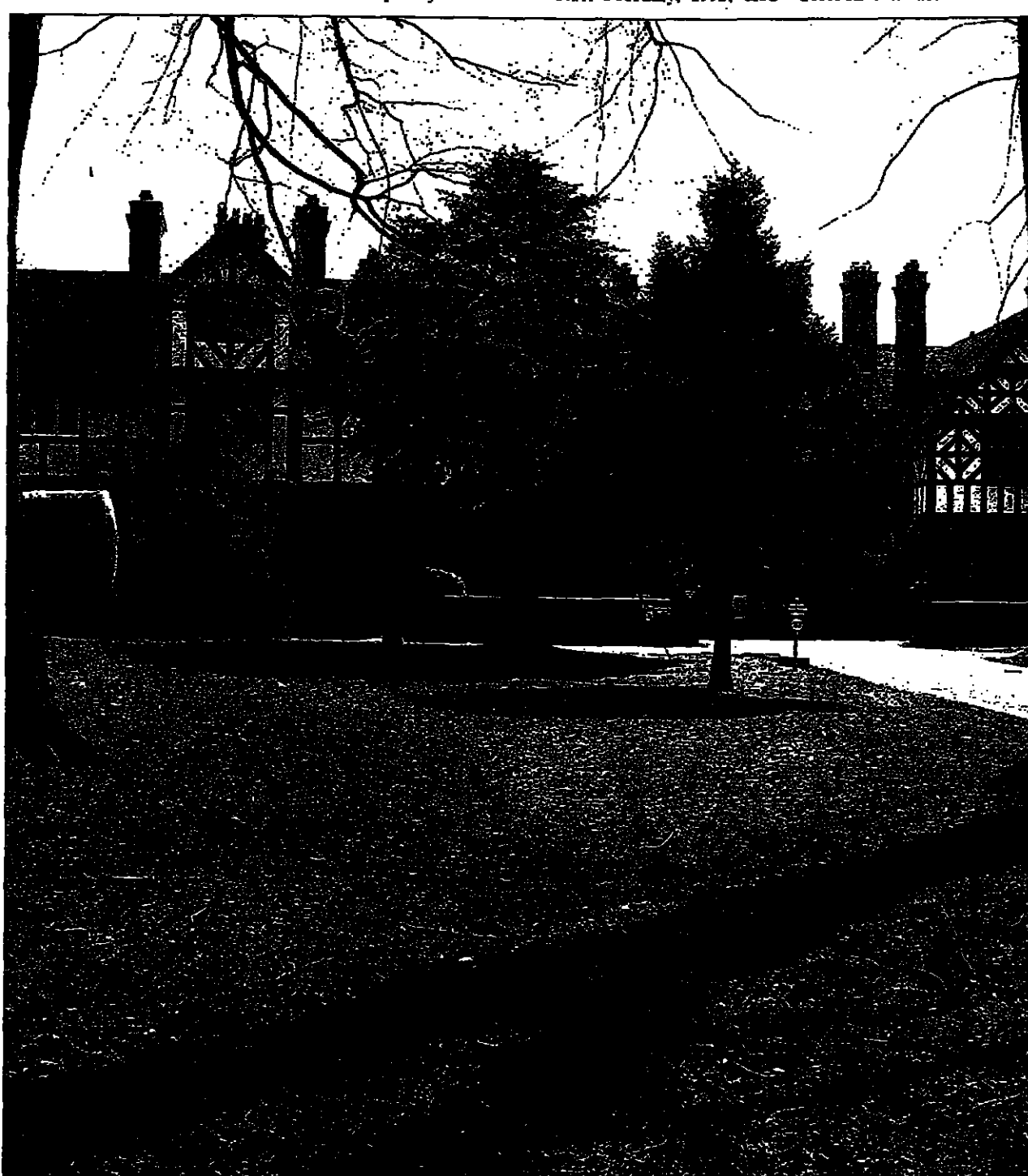
DI Oates said: "There is no doubt that in that period when the abuse was at its height, a lot of the residential care workers were so poorly paid that it was an easy avenue for these paedophiles... They had a captive audience and no one believed the kids. They were free to perpetrate their evil."

"These victims [went] away believing that they were the only ones, and never talked about it," he added, "that is often why these allegations are now being made several years later, after young people realised that what happened to them was wrong."

There is evidence too that some [abusers] have risen fairly high up in social services and so when allegations started to come in they were in the ideal position to stop it in its tracks.

"Some of these lads were moved from one home to another where they were abused, and the perpetrators moved from home to home too. It is essential that we root out the paedophiles that still work in the childcare arena."

Allan Levy QC, a leading childcare barrister who chaired the "Pindown" inquiry in Staffordshire, says paedophiles are still operating in children's homes. He wants better policing of the homes but says that the Department of Health is cutting back on inspectors.



House of shame: The Bryn Estyn home, described in the Clwyd report as 'a living nightmare' Photograph: Tom Pilon

Calls for social services council face indecision

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

Health ministers remain undecided on whether to introduce a general social services council to provide statutory regulation for individuals working with children, the elderly and disabled which would allow those who abuse their clients to be struck off.

John Bower, the junior health minister, has said he has "an open mind" on the issue. But a commentary the government plans to publish on the issue is likely only to canvass options, not provide outright backing for the idea.

Work on revising the central index which the Department of Health maintains of individuals who employers believe should be barred from working with children is still not complete eight months after it was commissioned. Mr Bower announced a review of it last August after the Islington child abuse cases demonstrated its ineffectiveness.

But a report on what should be done - and whether employers should have new rights of access to criminal records - has still not reached his desk.

On the broader issue of registration, ministers are understood still to be undecided whether to go for a statutory council rather than a voluntary registration scheme. Key questions about which groups of staff a statutory council should cover remain unanswered.

The department is currently considering two reports - one from the National Institute of

Social Work and a study of the issues that need to be addressed before a council is set up that was commissioned from the management consultants Price Waterhouse. Ministers plan to publish them, together with their own commentary on the options.

Support for a formal registration system - in effect some form of general social services council modelled on the lines of the General Medical Council and its nurses' equivalent, is growing, with past opposition from local authority employers and the growing private sector reducing.

Sussex Health Care, a private nursing home group, said yesterday that it believed a registration system may now be needed after employing as a care assistant a former nurse who had been convicted of rape but did not disclose that on his application form.

Home sacks rapist, page 7

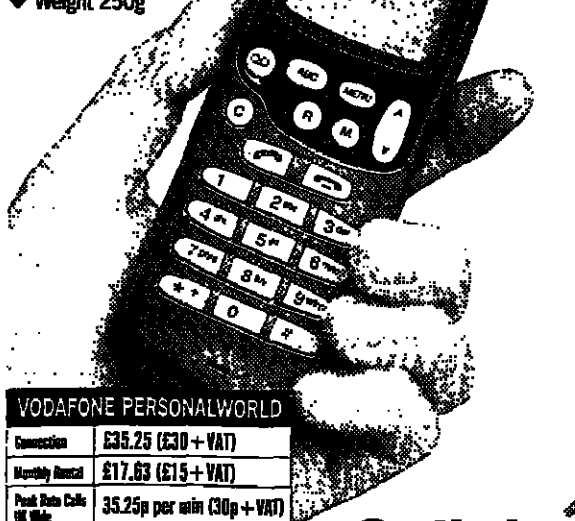


John Bower: junior minister with 'open mind' on council

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Redwood steps up calls for tax cuts

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

A 20,000-word policy agenda including a call for cuts in taxes is to be issued by John Redwood, intensifying the pressure on John Major to adopt a right-wing agenda for the general election.

Mr Redwood is determined to set out his policy priorities before the Conservative manifesto is finalised, in the hope of influencing the Cabinet over the direction of the Tory campaign.

It will highlight the battle for the soul of the Tory Party. The One Nation group of Tory MPs is planning to publish its own agenda for the manifesto in early May, as a direct rebuttal of Tony Blair's claims that Labour is the party of the centre.

Mr Redwood is anxious to ensure that the Tories strengthen their appeal to the traditional Tory voters, who supported Margaret Thatcher through three elections, by highlighting the distinctive policies that set the Tories apart from Labour.

His radical right-wing agenda may also be seen as a further plank in the campaign for the leadership. Downing Street patched up a rift with Mr Redwood last week but positioning is going on for a long-term contest after the election.

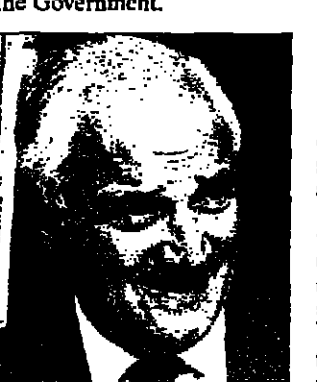
Mr Redwood is also preparing for talks with Sir James Goldsmith, the international financier, over his threat to field Referendum Party candidates against Conservatives.

Sir James yesterday repeated his threat to stand against David Mellor in his Putney constituency on the ITV Jonathan Dimbleby programme.

His intervention is being taken seriously by Tory Party leaders, who have so far refused to meet his demand for a referendum on Britain's withdrawal from the European Union.

Sir James said yesterday if he was asked to "back off" by Mr Redwood, he would "listen to his point of view and reject it".

The threat of Sir James to Tory chances in crucial marginals may be leading to a more Euro-sceptic tone from the Government.



Sir James: Renewed threat to stand in David Mellor's seat

Downing Street yesterday dismissed as "ridiculous" a report that Mr Major had described Britain's European partners as "a bunch of shits" but there was no doubt that he was angered by the refusal to lift the ban on the export of British beef. Colleagues said Mr Major was inclined to use "ripe" language when he was annoyed.

Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, will meet European partners today as part of the inter-governmental talks on a European common foreign policy. Right-wing Tory MPs will

keep up the pressure tomorrow with a backbench bill by Ian Duncan-Smith, rejecting the powers over Britain of the European court of justice.

Mr Redwood believes from his own soundings that the Government has got to fulfil its pledges to cut taxes, if it is to regain the trust of the voters. He has called for £5bn in tax cuts.

John Major has privately cast doubt on the prospect of cutting 4p off the basic rate to fulfill the 1992 Tory target of reaching standard rate of 20p in the £.

Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, yesterday dismissed Mr Redwood's argument that Kenneth Clarke can finance tax cuts by efficiency savings. He also tried to turn the attack on to Labour over taxation, after a poll of MPs showing many Labour MPs support Clare Short's view that those earning £40,000 or more should pay more in taxes.

He accused John Prescott, the deputy Labour leader, of supporting Ms Short by agreeing on the BBC *Breakfast with Frost* programme that a fair tax system was one in which some people paid less tax, and others paid more.

Ms Short, challenged about her remarks, refused to recant, but in a clear reference to the "spin doctors" around Mr Blair who downed her last week, she referred to a few in the party who did not support those aims.

The Labour leadership is likely to be under pressure from its own supporters to be more radical on a higher rate of tax. Mr Blair tomorrow will strengthen Labour's appeal to small businesses, by calling for more deregulation.

IN BRIEF

Investigators probe death crash

Crash investigators were yesterday examining the wreckage of an auto-gyro light aircraft which fell from 1,000ft, killing its pilot. Retired company director Charles Kendall Park, 65, from Bakersfield, Derbyshire, lost control when his rotor blades jammed during a rally at Long Marston airfield in Warwickshire at the weekend. Investigators from the Air Accident Branch removed the aircraft for tests at their laboratory in Farnborough, Hampshire.

£20m plea to save historic waterway

British Waterways is to ask the Environment Department for £20m to save the Caledonian Canal in the north of Scotland after surveys showed major repairs are needed at many of the 29 locks on the 200-year-old waterway. The 60-mile canal runs through the Great Glen from Corpach near Fort William in the west to Inverness in the east. Three man-made sections of 22 miles join three natural lochs - Loch Lochy, Loch Oich and Loch Ness.

Loyalist warns of parade ban challenge

A leading Ulster loyalist warned that police bans on Protestant parades through a Catholic flashpoint in Belfast may be challenged. The RUC is under pressure to re-route marches from the lower Ormeau Road after clashes at Easter. Martin Smyth, Grand Master of the Orange Lodge and local MP, said the RUC was giving into threats of violence and "there will be a stand taken."

Hundreds pay tribute to Muslim leader

Hundreds of Muslims gathered in an emotional open-air tribute to Britain's Muslim leader Dr Kalim Siddiqui, who died last week from a heart attack. He was described as "the leading Muslim of his generation" at a two-hour service in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire. Dr Siddiqui backed the fatwa on the author Salman Rushdie and demanded that Britain chop off the hands of thieves.

Man shot with antique rifle

A 51-year-old man is being treated for a wound to his neck caused by an antique .22 rifle fired in his home in the village of Holmby St Mary, near Guildford, Surrey. Two other residents at the address - a 62-year-old man, who made a 999 call to police, and a woman aged 57 - are being questioned by Surrey police.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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John 20150

Delhi blast: Heir to Marquess of Bath injured and friends die as Kashmir and Sikh separatists claim 17 lives

Terrorists kill two Britons in hotel bombing

JAMES CUSICK

Viscount Weymouth, son and heir to the Marquess of Bath, was injured and his girlfriend and business partner both killed in a terrorist bomb attack on a New Delhi tourist hotel which left 17 dead.

The bomb, which exploded on Saturday night, was planted by Sikh and Kashmiri separatists. The young Viscount, 21, heir to the £150m Longleat estate was in hospital yesterday with minor head injuries.

The Viscount's girlfriend, Scarlet Kirby, and Crinan Wilde, a business associate, both thought to be in their mid-20s, were killed in the explosion which ripped through the low-budget Arjuna guest house near the city's main railway station. The hotel was popular with international backpacking travellers in the region.

The trio had spent most of the winter months in India helping with the creation of a new ski resort in Manali in the Himalayas. Last night Lord Bath, regarded as one of Britain's most colourful aristocrats due to his hippy appearance and lifestyle and the controversy he created by painting sexually explicit frescoes at Longleat, said he was "devastated" by the deaths. He said he was hoping to get his son back to home to England as soon as possible.

"I feel the right solution is to bring him home," he said. Lord Bath said he telephoned the Viscount, called Caewlin Thynn, yesterday morning. "Caewlin is understandably shocked. He was in the building that was blown up. He is all right at the moment, not seriously injured, but he has a tragedy on his hands."

When the Marquess initially spoke to his son, the authorities in India had not yet broken the news to him that his girlfriend and business friend had been killed. "They were all great friends and extremely fond of each other," said the Marquess.

The two dead Britons died as the building collapsed following the explosion which came from a 25kg device. Travellers from France, Nigeria and Holland also died in the explosion. The bomb is part of the campaign by the separatists to disrupt forthcoming elections in Kashmir.

Witness who saw the explosion said the four-storey hotel had simply collapsed. Communiqué sent to local newspapers in Kashmir said two previously unknown groups had claimed responsibility. One message said: "This is a first gift to India for conducting polls in Kashmir." The separatists' conflict with India is now in its sixth year and has involved the kidnapping of foreigners, including Britons and Americans. Police have so far arrested six Kashmiri militants in the New Delhi area in connection with the explosion.

Last night the Viscount's sister, Lenka, was trying to arrange a flight to be with her brother. "My brother is OK physically, but not emotionally," she said. Before he left for India, Viscount Weymouth had been studying economics and philosophy at University College, London. As a teenager he attended one of the country's top public schools, Bedales in Wiltshire. He was expelled from the school when he was 17 for smoking cannabis.

More concerned with his son's immediate health and plans to get him home, the Marquess said last night that he had no idea if his son would be returning to his academic studies or whether the ski and business venture would continue.



Blast scene: Rescuers clearing debris at the hotel to get to the dead and injured

Photograph: Saurabh Das/AP

Emma Thompson adds Bafta to Oscar trophies

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Arts Correspondent

Sense and Sensibility was voted best film of the year at the 1995 Bafta Awards ceremony at the Theatre Royal in London's West End, last night. But unlike the Oscars, Emma Thompson failed to take the prize for best adapted screenplay.

She could console herself, however, with the awards for best leading actress in the film, while John Hodge took the coveted best adaptation prize for the controversial Scottish film *Trainspotting*.

Sense and Sensibility, the adaptation of Jane Austen's early novel, won a third award which went to Kate Winslet for best supporting actress as the romantic Marianne.

The Alexander Korda award for the outstanding British film of the year went to *The Madness of King George*, while Nigel Hawthorne was voted best leading actor for his performance as the unhappy king.

Michael Radford took the David Lean award for the best achievement in direction for *Il Postino*.

The award, he said, went against "the accepted wisdom in the world of cinema that you have to make the film in the English language for it to be successful". It also won the award for the best non-English language film.

Braveheart followed up its Oscar successes with the Lloyds Bank People's Vote for favourite film, while *The Usual Suspects* took best original screenplay and Tim Roth was voted best supporting actor for his role in *Rob Roy*.

Persuasion, Mick Dear's adaptation of another Jane Austen novel, won the award for best single television drama, while *Cracker* took best drama series and *The Politician's Wife* was voted best drama serial.

Jennifer Ehle won best actress in the television awards for her role as Lizzie in *Pride and Prejudice* - the third Jane Austen hit of last year - and Robbie Coltrane best actor for third year running for his performance in *Cracker*.

Protestant clergy reveal dialogue with Sinn Fein

DAVID McKITTRICK
Ireland Correspondent

Leading Protestant clergymen have for the past six years been involved in confidential political and religious discussions with senior republicans, including the president of Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams.

Many of those involved in the exercise believe the talks, which began in 1990 and are still continuing, played a significant part in convincing republicans to steer towards the IRA ceasefire of August 1994.

During the period involved Sinn Fein policy has been adjusted to take considerably more account of the rights of Protestants and Unionists. Last month a number of speakers at Sinn Fein's annual conference alluded to such contacts and stressed their importance.

The long-running contact has been conducted in conditions of some secrecy, generally taking place in a monastery in the Falls Road district of west Belfast. Among the prime movers were Fr Alex Reid and Fr Gerry Reynolds, two Redemptorist priests based at the monastery, and the Rev Ken Newell, a south Belfast Presbyterian minister.

Today the contacts, which survived the breakdown of the IRA ceasefire in February, involve up to 10 Protestant clergy and lay people. They remain a sensitive issue as many Protestants disapprove of any links with republicans.

Some members of the group, including the two priests, have also for some years been in contact with leading figures in extreme loyalist paramilitary groups. The contacts are described by the Rev Newell in a book to be published this week, *The Fight for Peace*, and in a Channel 4 "Dispatches" programme to be broadcast on Wednesday.

In an unprecedented tribute to Mr Adams from a Protestant clergyman, Mr Newell said: "There is a side of him that is very reflective and warm, and he deeply believes people should be together and not apart."

The Sinn Fein president attended the talks on a regular basis for several years, before suggesting the circle should be widened to involve other members of Sinn Fein. They now involve figures from the Church of Ireland and the Presbyterian and Methodist churches.

Mr Newell said that in 1992, after 18 months of talks, the Protestants involved came to be convinced that Mr Adams and the other republicans were serious about peace. He described the Sinn Fein president as originally "emotionally distant" but said he developed a growing respect for the Presbyterian and Protestant traditions.

As the talks went on, said Mr Newell, the Protestants concluded that the Sinn Fein members had a new agenda and were genuinely looking for peace. Mr Adams said yesterday that Sinn Fein would shortly decide whether or not to take part in the Northern Ireland elections being held on 30 May.

He said in a radio interview: "We all have to be prepared to make the necessary flexible compromises to try and bring about a proper democratic negotiated settlement, which has the agreement of all the people of the island. That has to be the main focus."

Bart's may become charity-run hospital

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

A new charity to save St Bartholomew's Hospital and run it partly as a charitable hospital is to be launched in the next few weeks.

The Barts Foundation will then work with the City of London and the special trustees of the existing hospital to draw up a business plan which will determine whether the 800-year-old hospital has a long term future.

A report financed by the health service think tank, the King's Fund, has already proposed a future for Barts, modelled on the pre-war voluntary hospitals with the institution undertaking private work and NHS contracts while providing charitable treatment for non-paying patients.

But the new study will determine what the level of demand for paid-for services actually is, Bernard Harty, the City Corporation's Town Clerk,

or chief executive, said yesterday. It is hoped to have the results available by the summer.

"The question is what services are the city and business community and others actually prepared to pay for?" he said. Obvious candidates would be the occupational health services, which companies already run but which Barts might be able to provide more competitively, a minor injuries unit, a wide range of out-patient services, and a nursing home in which the City of London - with an ageing population - would buy places on contract.

Mr Harty stressed that the City of London had made no offer for the site or promised any money yet to help acquire it. "We would not decide the size of the site we wanted until we knew what services it would be possible to finance and provide there."

The Barts Foundation - being launched by doctors at the hospital and City figures who include the Lord Mayor of Lon-

don - will aim to raise the millions needed first to buy the site and then help run it.

Dr Max Gammon, a trustee designate of the foundation, which he said should be established in about six weeks' time, said raising the capital would not be difficult, but ensuring the funds were there to run services on the site "will be an immensely difficult nut to crack".

Backers of the scheme hope the Treasury might part with Barts for as little as £2m to £3m as its high content of listed buildings mean that for many uses the site is likely to have a negative value, despite its prime location. A proposal for the London School of Economics to move there, founded over the £100m-plus adaptation cost.

Questions are likely to remain, however, over the willingness of the NHS to dispose of the site for health care if that was seen to prejudice the redevelopment of the Royal London Hospital when Barts finally closes for NHS services.

Milk link to Crohn's disease

LIZ HUNT
Health Editor

A research charity yesterday advised thousands of people with a chronic gut disorder not to drink pasteurised milk, following claims of a link between the disease and a "superbug" found in some shop-bought pints.

Scientists say the bacterium, which causes an incurable bowel disease in cattle, may escape destruction by pasteurisation and could be responsible for more than 50,000 cases of Crohn's disease. John Hermon-Taylor, professor of surgery at St George's hospital, London, has found the bacterium, *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*, is carried by two thirds of sufferers. His team also found the microbe in 6 per cent of samples of retail pasteurised milk.

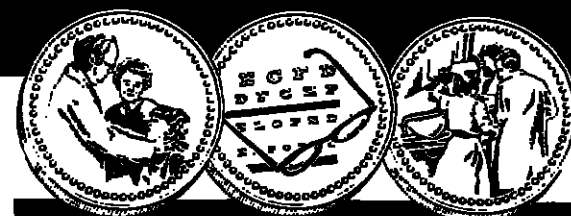
The Department of Health last night refused to back the charity's advice. A spokesman for the National Farmers' Union said that all steps are being taken to make milk safe.

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news

Underachieving: Teachers forced to deal with 'moral panic' over shortage of success among young males

Lack of job prospects 'may cause boys to fail'

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Girls' academic success over the last decade does not mean that boys are now the educationally disadvantaged sex, according to a report from the Equal Opportunities Commission.

The researchers are sceptical about the concept of boys' "underachievement" which has attracted widespread publicity. Boys' failure to match girls' performance in English in national tests and at GCSE has been a particular worry.

But the report points out that this "underachievement" tends to disappear after the age of 16, with boys still ahead in the top grades of most A-level subjects and scoring a higher percentage of firsts at university.

is often left to schools to pick up the pieces and it has been clear that schools are attempting to address what might be regarded as a moral panic about the education of boys in important and constructive ways.

For example, at one boys' school where 70 per cent of pupils gained A to C grades at GCSE, only 30 per cent gained top grades in English Literature. The head decided that the exam syllabus did not reward male creativity. When he put his pupils in for a syllabus with less coursework, they scored as highly in English as they did in other subjects.

Girls' success also has cultural as well as educational roots with most girls now having higher aspirations about qualifications and jobs.

The report says: "Cultural, demographic and labour market changes have influenced the way students and teachers think about the schooling of girls and boys, such that most now consider girls' education to be equally important."

"High-scoring female students are proving attractive to schools in the competitive climate of the 1990s and it is poorly-behaved, low-achieving boys up to 16 who appear to be the subjects of greatest concern."

Yet, despite their examination success, girls still lack confidence, especially about moving into jobs which have traditionally been done by men, the study suggests.

And both schools and local authorities are dominated by male managers. Discrimination against women in recruitment and job interviews continues to flourish, the researchers say.

School for thought: How the sexes compare



One woman who applied for a deputy head's job was told by the interviewing panel that she looked "gorgeous". The job, she said, went to a "fairly unremarkable" male colleague because he was "a disciplinarian", while she was "too pastoral".

Maureen Arnot, one of the study's authors, said we need to discover whether the strategies used to improve girls' performance could also be used to help boys, or whether new strategies were needed.

Were employment prospects, the encouragement of pupils to aim higher, the curriculum, or its assessment the key to a general improvement in schools?

She believes we also need to find ways of supporting schools at a time when many local authorities no longer have the resources available to help them improve equal opportunities.

Wealth divide affects health of nation

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

Powerful evidence that the more unequal a society is, the worse the health of its population has come from two studies in the United States.

The findings are further evidence for what the *British Medical Journal*, which published the studies, describes as a "big idea" - "that what matters in determining mortality and health in a society is less the overall wealth of that society, and more how evenly wealth is distributed."

Measures which reduce inequality are more likely to be effective in improving health than measures which increase overall wealth but also increase inequalities - the trend that has been underway in both Britain and the US over the past two decades, the journal says.

The studies from Harvard and Berkeley add "new authoritative data" to the argument that it is not just the absolute standard of living which matters but relative differences within a society - possibly as a result of "loss of social cohesion, depression, isolation, insecurity and anxiety."

Past data has shown that within the EU, for example, life expectancy has increased most in countries where the distribution of income has become more equal. The studies now show something similar among US states: those with the most unequal share of household income had the highest death rates, and the wider the income distribution the smaller their decline in mortality between 1980 and 1990. The same is found to hold true for specific causes of death which included heart disease, cancer and homicide.

"Policies which deal with the growing inequalities in income distribution may have an important impact on the health of the population," the authors of the Harvard study say.

The Berkeley study says its findings give "cause for alarm, given the increasing inequality of income and wealth in the United States", while in a commentary, George Watt, Professor of General Practice at the University of Glasgow, argues that with the same thing happening in the UK self-interest may eventually make the better-off interested in greater equality. "The advantages of living in a cohesive society may outweigh those of living in a free market," he said.

"If we share the resources of our country more fairly, we shall have a more cohesive society and reduce inequalities in health. It will not happen the other way around."

Staff vote to strike over violent pupil

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

Teachers at a Nottingham comprehensive school have voted for an all-out strike in a dispute over a 13-year-old boy who they say has a long history of disruption and violence.

The boy, Richard Wilding, was permanently excluded from Glaisdale school in February after he threatened both another pupil and a member of staff. However, the decision was overturned by an appeals panel and now staff at the school say they will not accept him back.

They say Richard, who has both learning difficulties and behavioural problems, was disruptive over a long period and was involved in more than 30 separate incidents between September 1995 and February this year. In January, he was excluded for five days, during which time he twice returned to the school, only to be removed by the police.

Members of the National Association of Schoolmasters' Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), to which 20 of the

38 staff at the school belong, say they will begin an indefinite strike on Friday if he is not permanently removed from the school.

The union says the local authority referred to his exclusion as "a reasonable course of action," bearing in mind the boy's history of disruption. However, an independent appeals panel decided that he should be returned to school.

Since then he has been kept separate from other pupils, supervised by the head teacher. The NASUWT has been involved in an increasing number of disputes over disruptive pupils, and has called for more special units to be opened to deal with them.

Its members have voted for all-out strikes on two previous occasions, one involving a disruptive primary school pupil in Birmingham and the other at the Bishop of Llandaff school in South Glamorgan, where staff refused to teach a group of boys who had sexually assaulted a girl.

Nigel de Gruchy, the union's general secretary, said that in

this case it had not been able to find any solution.

"This boy has been disruptive over a long period of time. We won't have him back. The demand that NASUWT members should put themselves and the other children at risk through accepting this unruly boy back in their classes is unreasonable," he said.

The boy's mother, Rita Wilding, has said she is considering legal action in order to get him back into school properly and that he is distressed by being kept apart from other pupils.

"He cries before he goes to school and he cries when he gets home. I know he has problems but this is no way to treat him," she said.

A spokesman for Nottinghamshire County Council said it was doing all it could to find a solution to the problem. "The county council's education department is now working with the head teacher to find a solution which meets the educational needs of the pupil and at the same time addresses the concerns of the teachers," he said.

Crisis looms as recruitment of nurses hits all-time low

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

The Health Service is heading for a "major nursing recruitment crisis" with a drastic drop in the numbers expected to qualify, according to the Royal College of Nursing.

While 37,000 nurses were registered in 1983 and 14,000 in 1995/96, official statistics reveal that next year just 9,000 nurses will qualify - the lowest number ever, the College believes.

On the eve of the RCN's annual conference in Bourne mouth, Christine Hancock, the union's general secretary, accused the Government of having its "head in the sand" over the threat facing the NHS.

Ms Hancock said there was no shortage of people who wanted to be nurses, it was simply that the Government had cut the number of places.



Christine Hancock: Warning

Ministers had encouraged recruitment to be devoted to each NHS trust and as a consequence there was no co-ordination. Fewer trainees had been taken as part of the Project 2000 training programme in order to reduce "wastage".

Managers had failed to appreciate the "savagery" of the

cuts, believing quicker throughput of patients would mean a lower demand for nurses.

Ms Hancock told a pre-conference briefing that the system in fact required more staff for the intensive nursing necessary and more nurses in the community for people who had been discharged early.

Ms Hancock said the trusts were now forced to scour Finland, Holland, Germany, Sweden and Australia for staff. A trust at Colchester was paying for nurses to come to Britain.

Delegates to the conference will have an opportunity to protest over the shortages today when John Bowis, a health minister, faces a question and answer session.

Ms Hancock said: "The Government has to understand what such a drastic fall in the number of registered nurses will mean for patient care in the

NHS and the independent sector. The Government cannot have it both ways. On the one hand it refuses to collect national statistics on the nursing workforce but on the other it dismisses clear evidence from the RCN of nursing shortages as merely anecdotal."

In the absence of Government figures, the RCN is to set up its own model for predicting demand for nurses. Delegates are expected to back a resolution tomorrow calling for a national body to research and advise ministers and managers on workforce planning for all health care professions.

A spokesman for the Department of Health said ministers did not "recognise" the figures produced by the College. "All the evidence we have is that the match between supply and demand for nurses is better than it has ever been."

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Demand for ban on landmines

The Government is coming under increasing pressure to support a ban on anti-personnel mines at the start of a United Nations conference on the weapons that kill or maim more than 25,000 people a year, writes Paul Field.

The meeting in Geneva, which begins today, is part of a review of the Inhumane Weapons Convention, designed

to protect civilians from the mines. An estimated 110 million anti-personnel mines are scattered across 62 countries such as Afghanistan, Angola and Cambodia, devastating communities and economic growth.

British officials will support a plan to allow the use only of mines which self-destruct over time. But opposition parties, aid agencies, and Church leaders

have joined 27 countries in calling for a total ban.

On Saturday, at rallies across Britain, they said Britain must take the moral lead. Labour's defence spokesman, David Clark, said: "The Government has dragged its feet for too long... It should set an example by immediately supporting a ban on the trade of all anti-personnel mines."

On top of the poll tax deficit, most of which will have to be written-off, local authorities are owed £574m in unpaid council tax, £598m in business rates and £47m in residual

PAUL FIELD

Five years after its abolition, local authorities are still owed at least £1bn from the Community Charge. But the debt could be considerably higher because only 60 per cent of councils in England and Wales responded to a survey by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountants (Cipfa).

The Cipfa survey, based on 1994-95 actuals, gives a clear indication that the problem of arrears is an urban one, with London boroughs and metropolitan districts facing difficulty tracking down non-payers.

rates, abolished in 1990. Top of the outstanding debts table is Lambeth council, chasing £176m in total, with £75m in poll tax alone. Last year, the inner London authority only managed to claw back 6 per cent of its total amount of outstanding poll tax deficit. Westminster Council is chasing £67,000 of poll tax arrears and £4m in council tax.

The problem facing councils, under an obligation to chase arrears, is the high cost of recovery outweighing the income. The collection costs of all four debts for the 60 per cent of authorities which responded to the survey reached £331m last year.

Mr Dubock points out that if

councils are not seen to be pursuing the arrears residents may think they can avoid paying. "Clearly there is quite a lot of poll tax outstanding and the longer it goes on the more difficult it is to collect, but councils cannot be seen to be allowing people to get away with it. If they apply that to the council tax we get into a rapidly downward spiral," he said.

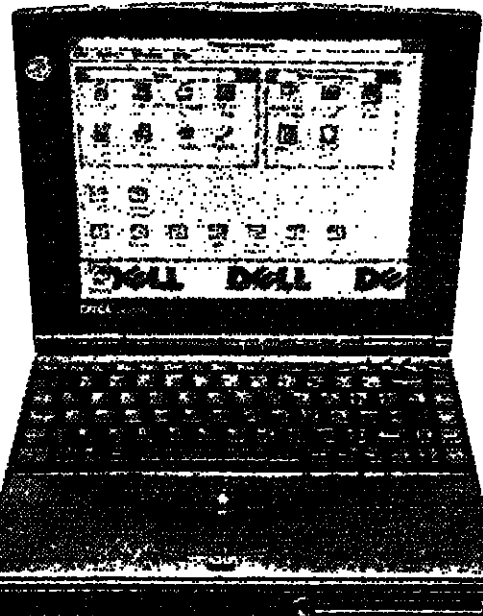
However Martin Pilgrim, under-secretary for finance of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, believes most councils are prudent enough to budget for outstanding debts.

"Most councils have made provisions or written-off those amounts. It usually results in pushing the council tax up but many have over-provided for the poll tax losses and are now getting a bonus. However, it cannot be used for services, only for lowering the council tax."

The survey indicates that council tax collection has proved easier than the poll tax. At the height of the protest against the Community Charge, local authorities were faced with arrears of 21 per cent of the collectable amount. The figure has now fallen to 7.6 per cent.

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Jails leak: Howard's plans to scrap renovation work and remove television sets from cells are exposed

Cuts may force closure of unfit prison blocks

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

Significant parts of Britain's jails may be forced to close because they are expected to become unfit for human habitation, a leaked briefing paper to the Home Secretary has disclosed.

It also reveals that Michael Howard is planning to remove televisions from the cells of prisoners in 20 jails – even though he acknowledges that it pacifies inmates and saves on staffing costs. He says television for prisoners does not accord with his "austere regimes".

The paper, seen by the *Independent*, is a background briefing for Mr Howard's latest meeting with prison staff detailing what he was prepared to tell officers – and what he was not.

One of the items of "background only" information was the fact that most modernisation schemes in the country's 136 jails were being dropped next year and that maintenance spending was to be reduced to the "bare minimum".

With jails already full from a record number of 54,000 inmates, the Prison Service expects to be forced to use police cells as sections of at least 14 jails, which have become unsafe through crumbling infrastructure or unsanitary conditions, are closed.

The report says the effect of the cuts in budgets which leaves the service with £100m to spend on its entire building stock and land "may well be the loss of some accommodation ...

because of infrastructure failure owing to inadequate maintenance or because of action by environmental health officers.

"Because margins on likely population and accommodation are so small any loss of accommodation will mean a significant risk of using police cells," it says. The paper also reveals the service is considering the closure of some jails, the merger of others and in the long-term the possible expansion of others.

The briefing document also shows that Mr Howard was able to tell staff that he was going to reject in-cell television – a key recommendation from the Learmont inquiry into security, carried out in the wake of last year's serious escapes. However, he was not prepared to tell staff that those inmates who already have them will be given six months notice of their withdrawal because of the threat to disorder. Nor that unconvicted prisoners on remand will still be allowed to have them.

Mr Howard's "line", as revealed in the documents, is that in-cell television "is incompatible with government policy that prison regimes should be decent but austere".

His meeting with staff was to discuss the impact of the 13 per cent budget cuts over the next three years. While his line to staff was that they should do their utmost to maintain education and other out-of-cell activities, he would not tell them that 60 per cent of jails were axing education classes.

The briefing paper confirms the 3,000 staff cuts being sought

by the service, but reveals that the Treasury is unlikely to fund the costs of redundancies beyond the beginning of 1997 putting even greater strains on prison resources.

Yesterday, Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, said: "This paper makes it clear that prison cuts are compromising inmates' activities as well as internal security. Ministers must learn the lesson that a high incarceration rate is irreconcilable with spending reductions."



Greetings Ma'am: The Queen, in the only public appearance on her 70th birthday, is given flowers at the Church of St Mary Magdalen at Sandringham yesterday. Over 1,000 well-wishers sang 'Happy Birthday' Photograph: Alban Donohoe

Till they meet again

The typical British manager spends almost 20 years in meetings during his or her career, a survey showed today. More than a quarter of that time is spent travelling to and from meetings, yet many of them could have been avoided by a telephone call, fax or letter.

The survey of 500 business managers, commissioned by BT, found they attended six meetings a week on average. A quarter of those interviewed said at least one meeting a week turned out to be pointless or unproductive.

The survey identified a widespread view of meetings as a status symbol – the more someone goes to, the more important they are. More than a third of managers complained that their company had a "meetings culture", in which everything has to be discussed at a meeting.

Some claimed that colleagues fix meetings at the end of the day to get away early, or at a client's office in the morning to get a lie-in.

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DAILY POEM

Many think Quintia's beautiful

By Catullus

Many think Quintia's beautiful. She's tall
And well-proportioned and her skin is white.
I grant her these good points, but I won't call
Her "beautiful". She has one fatal fault –
No sex-appeal: there's not a grain of salt
In that big dish to stir the appetite.
Lesbia is beautiful – not only blessed
With better looks than other girls, but dressed
In the mystery she's stolen from the rest.

Catullus's small quantity of verse fits nicely into the Phoenix series of 60p classics. *From Bed to Bed* is a rather surprising collection of the bawdy and the sensual, at the centre of which is Catullus's passion for the elusive Lesbia of which we are given full and fulsome treatment. Things, as they say, do not go well.

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Julie Ward mystery: Fresh hope after eight-year fight for justice

Father joins new Kenyan bid to solve bush murder

REBECCA FOWLER

The father of Julie Ward, the murdered British tourist, arrived in Kenya yesterday to join the fresh investigation into her death eight years ago, following the collapse of the initial inquiry in a police cover-up.

John Ward, a hotelier from Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, has spent more than £500,000 in his own quest to discover the truth behind the murder of Ms Ward, who was 28 when she died. A number of high-ranking Kenyans have been implicated in the crime, including a senior policeman, a politician and a confidante of the president.

At first the Kenyan authorities refused to mount a police investigation at all, or even hunt for Ms Ward's body. Mr Ward hired a plane to search the area immediately after her death, and has subsequently travelled to Kenya more than 60 times and taken on his own private detective.

Despite high-level support for the new inquiry, to be led by six investigators, Mr Ward denied reports that officials have indicated that the Kenyan government is preparing to pay all his expenses in an out-of-court settlement. He is currently taking legal action to recover the money.

Mr Ward said: "I've heard nothing, and no one has indicated they want a meeting to settle the issue of my expenses. There certainly wasn't an envelope waiting for me when I arrived. I'm quite confident we will get the money, but we're certainly not there yet."

Mr Ward launched his own campaign to solve Ms Ward's brutal murder at the remote Masai Mara National Park in September 1988 immediately

after her death when there was no action from the authorities. Within a week he found her severed leg and part of her jaw. The rest of her body was buried with petrol six miles from her abandoned jeep.

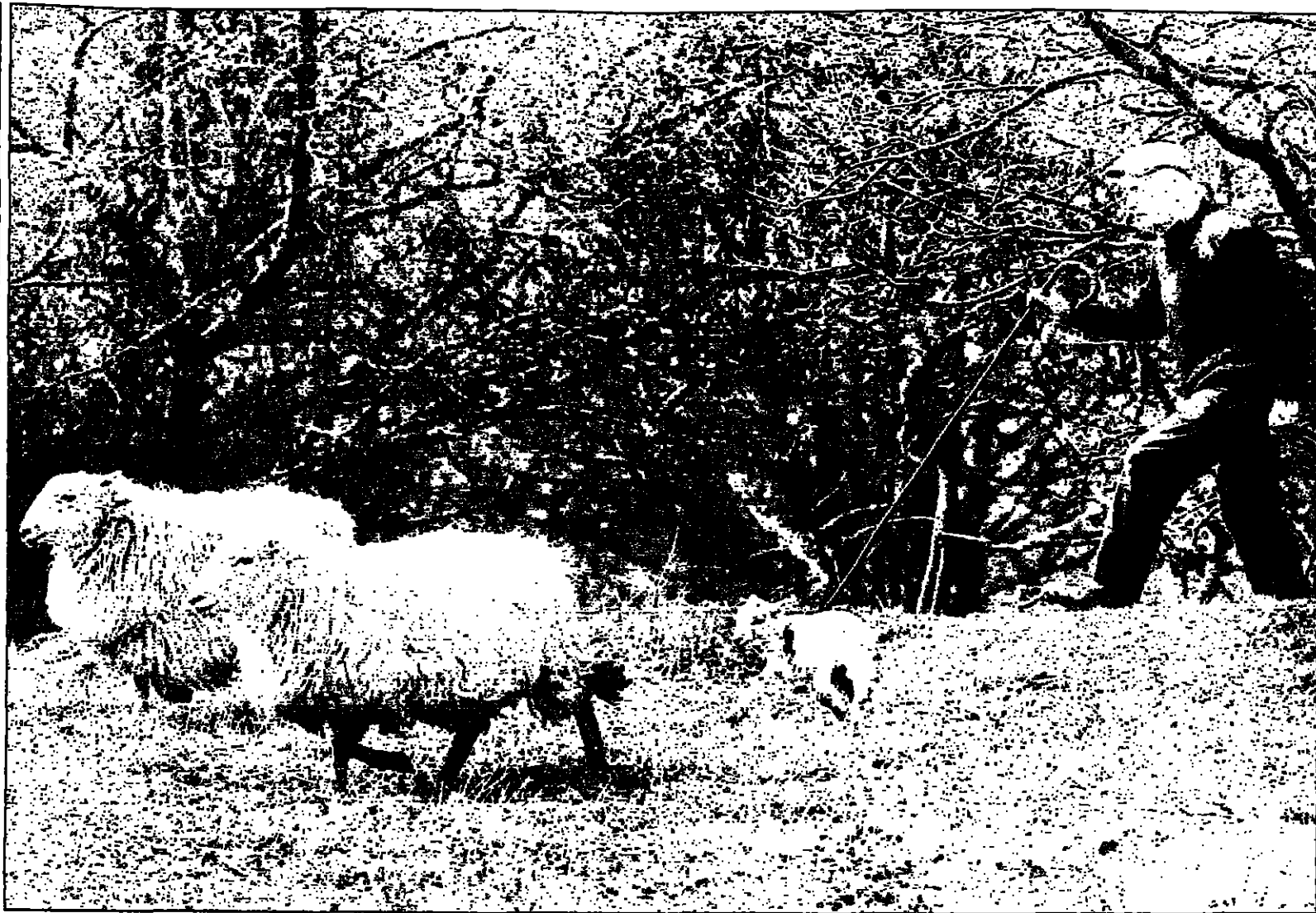
Two game rangers were originally charged with Ms Ward's murder, but they were acquitted in 1992 because of insufficient evidence. The new investigation is expected to focus on statements from a former Kenyan policeman, who claims he witnessed her final hours.

Valentine Kodipo, currently in hiding, said he came across Ms Ward's body while on patrol in the game reserve. He said she was taken bound, gagged and semi-naked from the back of a van and whipped by a number of men including a senior police officer before being bludgeoned to death while a leading politician looked on.

Although Mr Ward is now working alongside the authorities, and his private detective has been made a detective chief inspector for the duration of the investigation, he says that they would never have had a chance of discovering the truth if he had not taken on the case himself.

Mr Ward said: "This investigation really is taking off, and I'm sure the money I have spent will come back. But if I had not had that money to spend at the beginning, we would never have even found her body. Another 24 hours and it would have gone. Then we would never have known what happened to her."

The new investigation may also be backed up by Scotland Yard. Britain and Kenya have agreed to allow the Yard to reopen its own inquiry, but are in dispute over who will pay.



Victim: Sheep farmer Trebor Roberts among his flock at Esgair Garw, still affected by fall-out from Chernobyl

Photograph: Rob Stratton

Nuclear cloud hangs over the hills

The radioactive legacy of Chernobyl persists on the sheep farms and smallholdings of Wales, writes Tony Heath

made life even tougher.

A magistrate and leading figure in the National Farmers' Union, Mr Roberts said: "The crisis was badly handled at the start. Officialdom was complacent, even arrogant. We were told the problem would be over in a few months."

The chronology bears out that criticism. Chernobyl exploded on Saturday, 26 April, 1986; over the weekend heavy radioactive rain soaked north Wales.

The deluge triggered monitoring alarms at Trawsfynydd nuclear power station a dozen miles across the mountains from the Roberts' farm.

It was not until 20 June that

the Government admitted there was a problem and imposed restrictions which quarantined some 2 million sheep on about 5,000 farms in Wales.

Eventually, after a number of measures were floated – some of which could only be described as outlandish – a programme of monitoring and marking was introduced.

Now, sheep leaving a restricted area are scanned by Ministry of Agriculture officials using hand-held radiation counters. Failures are marked with streaks of apricot paint to show they cannot be sold for meat. The colour is regularly changed by decree.

Radioactivity falls when

sheep are moved to cleaner pastures and buyers of marked sheep can have them monitored again until they pass.

Farmers are paid £1.30 compensation for each scan. The real problem is in the marketing, Mr Roberts explained: "Say I need to send 30 animals to market. I have to give the Ministry seven days' notice. They come along and test and fail ten, so I can take 20 to market, by which time the price could move against me and as I'm only able to sell two-thirds I don't get the income I need."

From the window of the 200-year-old farmhouse, he looks across the valley to a neighbouring holding. "Only a mile

or two over there the restrictions have been lifted" he says wistfully.

The trouble for farmers like Mr Roberts lies in the ground. Much of the soil on his 1,000 acres is peaty, holding the radioactivity tenaciously.

A long association with the land breeds an equally tenacious doggedness. "We have learned to live with the effects of the crisis. It's very bad, but then you think of the people still suffering at Chernobyl itself."

This month several deformed lambs have been born on the farm. One had no lower jaw, another was missing bones. A third delivered by Mr Roberts' son, Emyln, seemed like a solid mass of gristle.

"We've not seen anything like that before," said Mr Roberts.

Blood-thirsty sucker in need of warm shelter

NICHOLAS SCHOON
Environment Correspondent

The wild, blood-sucking medicinal leech is clinging on at the edge of extinction. Huge numbers are raised in captivity because it is still used in medicine, particularly to make anti-blood coagulating agents and in plastic surgery.

But in the wild the leech, a relative of the earthworm, is globally threatened and in Britain there are only a few small, widely scattered populations. The species is one of 116 animals and plants for which rescue plans have been proposed by a joint government and wildlife charities committee.

Several of these populations are in lochs in Argyll. When surveyors from Scottish Natural Heritage, a government wildlife conservation arm, went to look for the leech last year at eight sites where it had been previously recorded, they only found it in two. "Every species has a right to exist in its natural habitat," says Martin Gaywood, who looks after the leech for SNH. "The medicinal leech is rather a charismatic species – people are both repulsed and intrigued by them."

Heritage
of the wild



Medicinal leech: Few left

The leech is also found on the island of Anglesey, Cumbria, and a few sites in southern England. Its stronghold is on the shingle spit of Dungeness, but the total UK population only amounts to a few thousand.

The species needs warm (and therefore shallow), nutrient rich and fairly still waters with abundant water plants. The two-inch long adults are her-

maphrodites and lay egg-containing cocoons in the late summer. In the following spring tadpoles are an important food source for the young leeches.

The medicinal leech is much larger than all but one of the other dozen species found in Britain, and it also has the most catholic diet – it will attach itself to mammals (including us), birds, amphibians and fish. It swims towards a source of movement in the water, inserts its sucker, injects a little anti-coagulant and drinks deep, taking up to five times its own body weight in blood. Once full it drops off and lies low, spending the next few weeks or even months digesting the meal.

Collection for medicinal purposes may have been an important bygone reason for its decline in Britain and elsewhere (although this may also be how it arrived here from Europe in the first place).

The rescue plan calls for nationwide survey to pinpoint its remaining haunts by the year 2000, with safeguards for all of these. Ponds should be dug near some of these water bodies to provide extra habitat. The maximum annual cost of this programme is put at £17,000.

Bank blast linked to blackmailer

PAUL FIELD

Scotland Yard detectives were last night still investigating whether the blast outside a Barclays branch was the work of the mystery blackmailer known as Mardi Gra who has been waging a letter-bomb campaign against the bank.

Three people were slightly injured when the small device exploded without warning at the height of the Saturday afternoon shopping rush at Ealing Broadway, west London.

The homemade bomb was in a flowerbed in an alley to the side of a Barclays branch, just

yards from three cash dispensing machines. Shoppers were evacuated from the scene within minutes and anti-terrorist branch officers spent almost four hours combing the area for forensic evidence.

It was the second time in three days that a bomb had exploded in west London, but police ruled out suggestions that it could be the work of the IRA, owing to the small size of the improvised device. Yesterday, officers were examining the possibility of a link to the terror campaign against Barclays.

Earlier this month it emerged that a blackmailer had been ter-

rifying Barclays for 16 months. Calling himself Mardi Gra, the extortionist has posted or planted more than 25 devices. Until Saturday no one had been badly hurt because the devices were all missing a part of the detonator.

The blackmailer, described by detectives as an obsessive man, appears to have taken a great pride in his work – bombs have been meticulously packaged and he has used distinctive logos and wording. He first struck in December 1994, when he sent six devices to Barclays branches in north-west London. Only one went off, burning the hands

of the woman who opened it.

The devices have been fitted into video boxes and books, and featured shotgun cartridges and bullets designed to explode when opened. Most devices were sent to addresses in London, direct to the bank, its officials, companies connected to them or placed in telephone boxes outside banks.

Last night a Barclays spokesman said that the bank had received no further information from the police as to the identity of the bomber. "It is of great concern to us. Obviously we are sending out regular advice to staff and this will continue."

Pay body backs 30 per cent rise for MPs

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

A record 30 per cent increase in pay is expected to be recommended by the top salaries review body before MPs pack their bags for their long summer recess. The Government is unlikely to block the move, which could raise MPs' salaries by more than £10,000 – from £34,350 to about £45,000 a year.

The recommended rises for

MPs' pay by the Senior Salaries Review Body, disclosed in the *Independent on Sunday*, threaten to boom on John Major. He backed moves to refer the issue of MPs' pay to the body in the hope of defusing it.

But its recommendations are likely to cause a public outcry, and leave the Government in a dilemma in the run-up to the general election. Ministers are also likely to distance themselves from the recommendations, leaving it to MPs

themselves to decide whether to accept the proposals in full.

There could be a series of votes on the issue before the summer recess at the end of July. Tory MPs are keen to increase their salaries, because they fear the tough new rules on public standards, following the Nolan report, will limit the scope for them to supplement their official salaries with private earnings outside Westminster.

Mr Major is blamed by some Tory MPs for wrecking their pri-

ivate incomes, by setting up the Nolan committee. Some left-wing Labour MPs have opposed increases in salaries for MPs, and may vote against any further rises, but the numbers could be increased if MPs are embarrassed by the size of the rise so close to the election.

It could also enhance their pensions if they lose their seats at the election. That would be seen as feather-bedding for the future, rather than getting a fair rate for the job.

However, some senior backbenchers believe MPs remain underpaid. Frank Field, the Labour chairman of the Commons Social Security Select Committee, said that MPs should be paid two rates, with a lower rate for those who take outside work.

Sir Edward Heath, the former prime minister, said in a *GMTV* interview yesterday that MPs should get £100,000 a year, but the number of MPs should be halved to about 325.

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international

Clinton-Yeltsin summit plays to the voters

Re-election hopes featured heavily at the weekend meeting, writes **Phil Reeves**

Moscow — A lacklustre Boris Yeltsin had five hours of talks with his friend and fan Bill Clinton in Moscow yesterday, in which they differed over Nato, made progress on two arms-control treaties, and did their best to help one another keep their jobs.

It was their 10th meeting in three years and allowed Mr Clinton to attempt to give a hefty nudge to Mr Yeltsin's campaign bandwagon before June's presidential elections.

Mr Clinton, facing an election in November, warmly supported Russia's economic reforms, although he was careful not to go as far as Germany's Helmut Kohl, who has openly said he wants to see Mr Yeltsin stay in the Kremlin. Although the presidents hugged and complimented one another, there was none of the backslapping merriment of the summit in New York last October.

Their discussions followed the G7 summit in Moscow on nuclear safety convened at the request of Mr Yeltsin, who has long harboured ambitions to join the leading industrialised nations, so far without success.

Although the two-day affair was marred by a domestic row over the death of 50 federal soldiers in a Chechen ambush, and overshadowed by Lebanon, it was not an outright disaster for Mr Yeltsin, and may even have allowed him to register some modest gains.

Above all, he managed not to commit any behavioural gaffes and although he seemed downbeat, he appeared in reasonable shape, and did nothing to heighten worries over his health which flared up last year with his second heart attack.

He berated his guests about Nato enlargement, which will have annoyed them but have gone down well with the electorate. Yesterday Mr Clinton said his position on Nato was unchanged, but in no "way, shape or form does it mean a threat to the security or legitimate interests of Russia".

At a joint press conference, Mr Yeltsin even squeezed in some overt campaign sloganeering. Asked about his prospects of beating off a Communist challenge for the Kremlin, he retorted: "I'm not going to answer that, because I'm sure victory will be mine." This is disputed by Gennady Zyuganov, the Communist leader, whom Mr Clinton met last night. The Russian — who, rivals warn, will bring back Soviet-style Communism — told him he wanted "long-term, good-neighbourly and normal relations" with the US.

Mr Yeltsin also seized the opportunity to try to convince voters he is fulfilling his promise to end the Chechen conflict before the election. In remarks that will astonish recent visitors to villages in southern Chechnya, which have been bombed

and shelled, he said there had been "no military operations" in Chechnya since 31 March. "It is another thing that some gangs are still there running around." Nineteen of Chechnya's 22 regions had signed peace deals, he said. But Chechnya "must and will" remain within Russia, a view Mr Clinton endorsed.

After their meeting yesterday, Mr Clinton said important progress had been made on the agreement on Conventional Forces in Europe, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty. Russia has been accused of breaching the former by having too many troops in the Caucasus; the latter involves a dispute over the definition of the missiles covered under the treaty.

But as the flags and banners came down in Moscow, Russians may well have been wondering whether they had witnessed much sound and fury, but nothing of significance.

The G7's main agreements on nuclear safety contained no surprises and no historical advances. Even the agreement to have a complete ban on nuclear testing — perhaps its most significant achievement — depends on settling differences with China and India.

Mr Yeltsin has been told to raise the issue with Peking later this week, during his trip to China — another fixture which has as much to do with his efforts to be re-elected as with global affairs.



Pointing the way: Mr Clinton with Mr Yeltsin yesterday. They differed over Nato enlargement but made progress on two arms treaties. Photograph: Reuters

Tight result forecast as Italy votes

ANDREW GUMBEL
Rome

With everything still to play for after a tightly contested campaign, Italian voters flocked to the polls yesterday for their third general election in four years, hoping above all for a clear result to enable the country to end its chronic political instability.

Early indications suggested that turnout among the country's 49 million eligible voters would be high, belying widespread forecasts of voter cynicism about how much this election can really change.

The results, which will probably have to be digested carefully even after they are announced early this morning, will point to one of three outcomes:

■ A victory for the centre-left coalition known as the Olive, or Olive Tree, led by the Bolognese economist Romano Prodi and supported by the mainstream left as well as progressive Christian Democrats, environmentalists and the outgoing prime minister, Lamberto Dini. This would mark a historic turning point for the Italian left, which has been excluded from national government since the war.

■ A victory for the centre-right, led by Silvio Berlusconi and his reformed neo-fascist ally Gianfranco Fini. This would restore the government led by Mr Berlusconi after the last election in March 1994, but without the support of the separatist Northern League, which has since gone its own way. Its programme this time is less moderate, less committed to the free market and more Euro-sceptic.

■ No clear result. This could lead to another "technical" government similar to the one

led by Mr Dini for the last 15 months, or a broad cross-party coalition committed to institutional reforms, or total breakdown followed by another general election.

Opinion polls have been banned for the last three weeks, but private surveys have pointed to a slight advantage for the Olive, which has the confidence of the financial markets and many of Italy's foreign partners. But the exact nature of the new government will depend on the detail of the result. Trends to watch out for include:

■ The relative strength of Mr Berlusconi's Forza Italia and Mr Fini's National Alliance. The moderate wing of Mr Berlusconi's party has been steadily squeezed over the past two years as Mr Fini has grown stronger; a poor result for Mr Berlusconi could force his retirement from politics and the collapse of his party.

■ The performance of the Northern League which, according to the private surveys, could be a big beneficiary if Forza Italia fades, allowing it to hold the balance of power. Both main blocs have spurned alliances with the League because it is considered unpredictable and dangerously separatist, but they might have to change their minds.

■ The performance of Mr Dini, another pivotal figure. Although standing with the centre-left, he is a conservative by nature and a former Berlusconi acolyte. If the result is close, and if he does well, he might emerge as a compromise candidate for prime minister, attracting support not only from the Olive but also from disillusioned moderate members of Forza Italia.

Shogi bears fruit with a champion for Japan's youth



Habu: King of shogi — a game played by 20 million

champion vowed, his lovely bride at his side. "I am cleaving to a fresh resolve but I must act responsibly — both as a shogi player and as a member of society."

Richard Lloyd Parry

Japan, a country of powerful groups rather than charismatic individuals, has never been a great breeding ground for heroes, but the last year has seen the emergence of a surprising number.

Sumo wrestling fans have been electrified by a pair of boyish brothers named Wakanoana and Takanohana. The ace baseball pitcher Hideonono, who last year transferred to the Los Angeles Dodgers, has gained a following across America. But this year the spotlight has fallen on a different, and unlikely role model: a skinny, bespectacled 25-year-old named Yoshiharu Habu.

Habu is a grand master of

shogi, an ancient Japanese game with rules and terminology very similar to chess. Shogi is played on an 81-square board, with flat wooden counters each bearing a Chinese character; as well as familiar pieces like kings, bishops and knights, the player manipulates jewels, lancers, and gold and silver generals.

Like chess, it requires a combination of precise technique and imaginative intuition, qualities central to Japanese culture, from judo to landscape gardening. "Habu's most powerful weapon is the inspiration he gets from the right side of his brain," explained a eulogistic profile in the weighty *Yomiuri* newspaper.

"This inspiration is being called 'Habu magic'."

There are 20 million shogi players in Japan and in February Habu climbed to the very top of the heap by winning all seven of the major championships. His frowning countenance has appeared in countless newspapers and magazines, and even on a promotional poster for the Tokyo metropolitan police. But shogi skills alone do not explain this sudden celebrity — Habu's appeal lies in the combination of his youth with a very old fashioned and traditional sensibility.

In appearance he is unprepossessing to the point of nerdishness — pale, skinny and

LOCAL HEROES: 13

Yoshiharu Habu

owl-like, habitually photographed hunched over the board in the traditional male kimono, waiting himself with a paper fan. Shogi players are by nature a reticent bunch but Habu has surprised even them with his undemonstrativeness.

Even after clinching the grand slam he did not allow himself the traditional clenched fist victory salute, although he caused a minor scandal when he

was seen applying lip balm before a crucial game. The significance of this action is elusive, but it raised eyebrows in the rarefied shogi world. "Such a gesture may not have appeared altogether appropriate for a top player on the verge of winning all seven titles," the *Yomiuri's* critic cautioned.

The younger generation of Japanese — well-fed, well-off and bored — are the cause of much anxious talk among journalists and theorists, and commentators are in no doubt about the significance of Habu's rise, and that of his sporting compatriots.

"Unlike the traditional image of a genius — an aloof person with a strong sense of individ-

uality — all of these young heroes are polite, quiet and thoughtful, and have pleasant personalities," observed one profile.

Evidence suggests, however, that Habu is more fun than he looks. Despite his sober demeanour, he won the envy of young men all over Japan last month by marrying Ise Hatada, a beautiful actress popular for her roles in several television dramas. The ceremony was a traditional rite held at a local Shinto shrine, but Ise's world could not be further from Yoshiharu's: a few weeks before the wedding there was great excitement when she was assaulted in Tokyo's station,

apparently by a crazed male fan. Shogi is an all-consuming game, and the emotional and intellectual demands have been the death of more than one marriage. An old folk song tells the tragic story of a man whose obsession with the game cost him everything. Much of his pathos is lost in translation, but the first line is salutary: "I have staked my life on little shogi pieces which would disappear if I blew on them."

But if anyone can combine the demands of domestic bliss and shogi mastery, it is Habu, as he made clear at the couple's post-nuptial press conference. "We will combine our energy to build a happy household," the

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EU plans cross-border database on refugees

As immigration controls are tightened, there are fears the system will be open to abuse, writes **Sarah Helm**

Plans are being finalised in Brussels for a Europe-wide refugee database, which will hold the fingerprints of every asylum-seeker who applies for refuge in an EU country.

The database, to be called Eurodac, is viewed by refugee agencies as another sign that Europe is erecting an ever-tightening "ring-fence" against asylum-seekers and immigrants. Civil liberties lawyers caution that a database for refugees could set a precedent for other EU-wide personal data systems, to assist in policing and internal security throughout a border-free Europe.

Britain already has a national system for fingerprinting asylum-seekers, and France has signalled its intention to set up a national scheme. The plan being drawn up in Brussels envisages an unprecedented cross-border data-sharing system.

According to a confidential draft convention on Eurodac now circulating between justice ministries, a central computer would be based in one EU capital — possibly Rome — with linking terminals in each member state. Immigration officials in each country would have access to the fingerprint database, and would use the information to see if an applicant had applied elsewhere in Europe.

The stated intention is to further harmonise refugee policy in each member state and prevent applicants who are refused entry to one EU country, from moving on to apply in another. Under an existing convention, EU countries have already agreed that an asylum-

seeker refused entry in one country should be refused entry by all.

Refugee bodies, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, fear that the database could be open to wide-scale abuse. Security agencies in the asylum-seeker's country of origin could gain access to the data, thereby placing applicants at risk should they be forced to return home. Asylum-seekers would have few rights to check information held on computer, where details on why an application was made and refused will also be stored. The EU officials are discussing whether the information should be made available for internal police investigations or to other EU authorities.

Friso Roscam-Abbing, of the European Consultation of Refugees and Exiles, said: "Our main fear is that the information about an asylum-seeker would get back to the applicant's country of origin, leading to further persecution."

The proposals are not a European Commission initiative and have not yet been presented to the European Parliament for approval. Neither the UN High Commissioner for Refugees nor any other interested bodies have been consulted on the plan, which is being discussed in secret between officials of justice ministries in member states under the inter-governmental system of co-operation, established for justice and home affairs issues under the Maastricht treaty. As such there is extremely limited scope for democratic consultation. Once

the plans have been finalised by civil servants, they will be presented for agreement to Europe's justice ministers. Britain, which opposes most new centralising initiatives proposed in Brussels, is expected to support Eurodac as a means of strengthening immigration controls.

"The human rights implications are enormous, yet decisions like this just go through on the nod," said David Burgess, a leading British asylum lawyer. "Either we are creating a two-tier system of rights — one for third country nationals and another for EU nationals. Or we are going to accept that holding information on huge groups of people like this is normal."

The Eurodac scheme follows a series of measures taken jointly by EU member states aimed at co-ordinating asylum procedures, in the wake of fears of growing numbers of so-called "economic migrants" seeking to enter the EU. Common methods for processing asylum seekers have been agreed, as has a common visa list, under which member states impose visa requirements on a single list of countries. A single EU visa will also soon be issued.

The numbers seeking asylum in the EU have already been significantly reduced. As the ring-fence is erected, it is envisaged that internal border checks between EU member states will be further relaxed allowing EU citizens to move more freely. Britain, however, still opposes reduction of internal border controls despite the new measures for exterior frontier controls.

IN BRIEF

Aid money used for child sex allegation

Sydney — An independent investigation will be conducted into accusations that Australian diplomats in Asia used aid money to buy access to orphans for child sex, the government said yesterday. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer announced the inquiry during an official visit to Thailand's capital, Bangkok, after Sydney's *Sun-Herald* newspaper reported the allegations. AP

'Drunken' Russians in lethal accident

Moscow — An armoured personnel carrier carrying eight drunken Russian servicemen crashed into a truck before levelling a car and slamming into a house, killing one civilian in the Ingush region bordering Chechnya, the Itar-Tass news agency reported. The 10-ton vehicle was part of a Russian Interior Ministry column heading for Chechnya. AP

Kenyan party condemns government

Nairobi — Kenya's opposition Safina party, still awaiting official registration, yesterday appealed to Western countries to condemn the Nairobi government for what it called its hostility to political opposition. Richard Leakey, a renowned palaeontologist and secretary-general of Safina, said in a letter to the Nairobi envoys of the United States, Japan and several European countries that the government had demonstrated it did not want the next elections to be "fair, let alone free". Reuters

New leader for Nigerian Muslims

Lagos — Muhammad Maccido, the choice of the people of Sokoto in northern Nigeria, was yesterday named Sultan of Sokoto, the traditional leader of Nigerian Muslims, local journalists said. The military government on Saturday and arrested. Reuters

Correction

In Saturday's *Independent*, in the article titled "Egypt undergoes a change of heart" by Adel Darwish on page 9, the two quotes advising Hizbollah to reject the ceasefire proposal were in fact Ali Khamenei. The omission of two lines from the original meant they were incorrectly attributed to Sheikh Sayyed Tantawi, the head of the Egyptian Official Church, Al-Azhar University.

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April 2012

UN evidence heaps more blame on Israelis

Three days after the Israeli slaughter of at least 110 Lebanese refugees at the United Nations peace-keeping post in Qana, the UN has released evidence which suggests that the Israeli soldiers whose headquarters were blasted apart by the Israeli guns have placed a small spray of coloured plastic flowers in the crater of a shell that killed 40 people. But less happy sentiments are being expressed among the UN troops as evidence is slowly amassed about what actually happened in the minutes last Thursday when the UN compound was turned into a replica of the Sarajevo market massacre.

The evidence includes UN witnesses who say a pilot-less Israeli reconnaissance drone taking photographs over the compound as the slaughter went on. If this was of the type

that transmits live television pictures – which the Israelis are known to possess – then the Israeli artillerymen must have known what they were shooting at within seconds. UN troops have also established that the three bearded Hizbollah men who fired the two Katyushas and four mortars whom the Israelis claim they were firing at 300 metres from the compound, were later identified by Fijian troops running into the UN compound for protection just before the bombardment. They may be among the dead.

UN technical personnel have also concluded that all 12 shells to hit the base were 155mm shells with M-733 proximity fuses which exploded each round seven metres above the ground, thus causing maximum

casualties and what in military parlance is called "amputation wounds": in other words, they cut off arms, legs and heads. They were fired from new American M109A1 howitzers which need a forward artillery "spotter" – in this case presumably the drone – and which are almost impossible to fire inaccurately.

One UN official recalled an almost identical incident a month ago when 32 Israeli shells were fired at the site of a Katyusha launching 300 metres from a UN compound in another area.

"They didn't put a single round into the UN base. I know what they're saying now, but these Israeli soldiers are rewarded for being tough and aggressive and I simply cannot believe that this was an accident," one officer said. Of all UN personnel I spoke to privately yesterday, only one said that he could not bring himself to think that the attack was deliberate.



Robert Fisk hears that shells fired on Qana were designed to cause maximum casualties and could hardly be fired inaccurately

Records also show that despite Israel's claim that it did not know that refugees were

sheltering under the UN's protection, a senior member of the UN's civil staff in southern Lebanon told an Israeli general at 1.15pm on Tuesday – 49 hours before the massacre – that 5,000 refugees were being protected and that the civilians were sheltering in every UN

position, including Qana. The remarks were made after Israeli artillery rounds repeatedly landed close to UN supply convoys taking blankets and food to civilians at the UN posts.

It has also emerged that in the two minutes after the Katyushas were fired from a cemetery to the north of the Fijian compound, another 260 civilians, inhabitants of Qana who had hitherto stayed in their homes, ran in panic through the gates of the post – along with the three Hizbollah men – bringing the total number of refugees to around 880. Fearing retaliation on the area – though not, of course, on their compound – Fijian soldiers began to pack as many refugees as they could into their bunkers, physically pushing women and children into the concrete interiors

until no more could be accommodated.

"We wanted women in first but mothers here have three or four children and they wouldn't go into the bunkers with three children and leave the fourth lost outside," a Fijian officer said yesterday. "They were hunting for children who had run off and were playing with friends. They were crying because they couldn't find them. Then the first Israeli shells came in." Another soldier described what happened next. "There were shrieks of agony and pain as the shell fragments cut off the legs and arms and heads of the refugees. They sounded like animals who had gone mad. We desperately tried to get UN operations to tell the Israelis to stop. But the Israelis didn't respond; they just sent us

a 'shell warning' – after the people were already being massacred. The UN pleaded with them to stop but they went on shelling for 12 minutes."

A third soldier, lying on the ground at a position outside the compound, saw the first Israeli 155mm round hit the battalion's water tower. "Then I heard terrible screams and shrieking. People started bursting from the compound gate, trying to run away, people without hands, people with blood spurting out of them. There was a woman without a hand making a terrible squealing noise and a man whose foot had been torn off running on the stump of his leg in panic leaving a stream of blood behind him. Then more shells came in and exploded mostly among the women and

Truth brings reality to PR show at Qana

ROBERT FISK
Qana, southern Lebanon

Hervé de Charette's face was as white as death. The French Foreign Minister, neatly clad in blue suit and tie, had gingerly walked through the scene of last week's massacre at the UN's compound, nodding diplomatically as the UN's Fijian commander described the 12 minutes in which Israeli shells slaughtered up to 120 refugees, the sliced-up corpses that his soldiers were forced to pick up, the difficulty in identifying parts of the children who had been torn to pieces. Mr de Charette

wrong. "We have lived through hell," Mrs Zrir continued. "The people were chopped into pieces by the Israeli bombs. They bleed, these people. You should have seen the heads."

At the French foreign minister's right, a Lebanese softly translated the woman's dreadful words. The PR men began to look uneasy. "We have lived here 40 years and now we are treated like animals," the woman cried. "Do you know what the dogs did at night after the killings? They were hungry and I saw them in the ruins eating fingers and pieces of our people."

Mr de Charette stared at her as if he had seen a ghost. This had clearly not been part of the programme, a schedule that was supposed to have whisked the foreign minister from a light lunch at UN headquarters in Naqurah to a photo-opportunity on the roof of the wrecked UN battalion HQ, a three-minute press conference to give the impression of openness and a swift drive back to the coast and a helicopter to Beirut – everything, in fact, that would enhance France's much-trumpeted love for Lebanon. Reality had very definitely not been part of the programme.

A UN soldier was quite blunt about it. "This place is going to be turned into one of those awful pilgrimage sites for the great and the good," he muttered. "Boutros-Ghali sent his emissaries today to express their horror. But they'll do no more than they did after Srebrenica. They'll tut-tut and shrug it off."



After the storm: Fijian UN soldiers in Qana clearing away the debris left by last week's Israeli shelling of their headquarters in the village in south Lebanon that killed more than 100 refugees. Photograph: Hassan Hamed/Reuters

This is all for show. And they won't even have the guts to condemn Israel – even now – for this wickedness."

And indeed, the UN Secretary-General did send General Frank Van Kuppen of the Netherlands Army – not, perhaps, a happy choice after the Dutch army's disgrace at Srebrenica – and he duly marched round the site of the worst carnage, asking how many rounds landed, where the Katyusha missiles were fired from and whether he could be shown this site to discover if any Israeli shells had fallen there.

He would be meeting with General Amnon Lipkin Shahak, the Israeli chief of staff, he said.

Yes, he would be asking to meet the soldiers who fired the fatal artillery rounds – "at chance of that," another UN soldier said as he listened to all this – and with that, Van Kuppen, an immense figure in his steel flak jacket and huge helmet clanked out of the compound with a colonel from the Royal Engineers.

Mr de Charette was even more gentle of spirit. What had happened on Thursday was "unfortunate", an event for which France wished to show its sympathy for the Lebanese. So how did it rank in the scale of civilian atrocities? How did it rank, for example, beside the Sarajevo market massacre?

"Frankly," the Foreign Minister replied sharply, "I have not had an opportunity to make categories of unhappiness. What we have to work to do is to make it impossible for this to happen in the future in Lebanon." And so say all of us. Did he believe Israel had given sufficient explanation of the massacre? "I hear there is an inquiry. We have to await the results."

The problem, however, is that neither America nor Europe are going to condemn the country which pounded the refugees of Qana with 155mm shells for 12 minutes; and such condemnation is about the only palliative that the Lebanese might accept for the moment.

And you can see their point. On the coast road back to Beirut last night there were burning cars, civilians deliberately targeted by Israeli warships north of Sidon, three of whom had been badly wounded. Had this been a Syrian warship shelling Israeli civilians on the Haifa-Iel Aviv road, of course, Mr Clinton himself would have deplored – rightly – an act of "international terrorism."

But not a word of criticism about this scandalous targeting of Lebanese civilians was uttered by the foreign ministers of America, Russia, France and Italy as they sought to bring an end to an apparently unstoppable war.

Peres turns to US diplomacy

PATRICK COCKBURN
Jerusalem

In search of a ceasefire in Lebanon, Warren Christopher, the US Secretary of State, yesterday shuttled between Damascus and Jerusalem to talk with President Hafez al-Assad of Syria and Shimon Peres, the Prime Minister of Israel.

President Assad wants to see the reinstatement of the 1993 understanding under which Israel and Hizbollah pledged not to fire at civilians. Mr Peres, who launched Operation Grapes of Wrath 12 days ago, wants the Israeli army to be able to shoot into villages in the Israeli occupied zone in south Lebanon from which Hizbollah guerrillas are operating.

Mr Peres faces an election in six weeks. If he is seen by Israeli voters to have caved in under international pressure, this could cost him the election. At the same time, Israeli-Arab voters, who yesterday called a day of mourning because of the attack on Lebanon, may stay at home on 29 May.

Mr Christopher arrived in Jerusalem yesterday morning for two hours of talks with Mr Peres. The US and Israel are eager to fend off intervention by Russia and France, whose foreign ministers are also in the area. Mr Peres said: "If there is more than one channel there will be total confusion." He added that a ceasefire was possible "in a number of days."

President Assad assured Mr Christopher that he would urge Hizbollah to seek a ceasefire. The US wants Syria to rein in Hizbollah in return for Israel limiting the freedom of action of its army. The ceasefire would be supervised by a body headed by the US. After the

slaughter of 105 Lebanese refugees at Qana, Israel is very dependent on American diplomatic strength and goodwill.

Meanwhile, there are growing signs of disagreement in the Israeli armed forces. A senior officer in the Northern Command of the Israeli army was quoted by the daily *Ha'aretz* as saying: "As far as we are concerned, [the operation] was a failure... yesterday the terrorists fired more than 100 Katyushas into northern Israel."

The officer said that Israeli military intelligence miscalculated the strength of Hizbollah. He said: "Obviously, they will try to shift the blame... but the biggest fiasco of this operation is military intelligence's."

Immediately after the Qana incident the General Staff reportedly curtailed Israeli army activity – though this is contradicted by Lebanese observers – and Major General Amnon Levine, the head of Northern Command, is said to be "low and very angry".

Yevgeni Primakov, the Russian Foreign Minister, is expected in Israel tonight. Although Israel says the US is the only channel for mediation, the intervention of Mr Primakov and Hervé de Charette, the French Foreign Minister, will put pressure on Mr Christopher, who until the Qana massacre, supported the Israeli operation. Israeli commentators note wryly that President Assad, who appeared isolated a month ago when President Clinton organised the Sharm el-Sheikh conference on terror and Middle East peace, is now in a very strong position. At the weekend he had Mr Christopher, Mr Primakov and three European foreign ministers paying him court.

This week in THE INDEPENDENT

This week and every week, Section Two has a new look, with more pages, new features, a daily radio column and an expanded listings section providing Britain's most comprehensive daily guide to going out.

on Monday

A new regular section, *Family Life*, that deals with the interests and problems of parents and children. Julie Myerson's column also focuses on home life. Plus: a new series – Do we need? – which challenges the icons of modern Britain. And, every Monday, unrivalled coverage of the expanding world of information technology in our Network pull-out section.

and in Sport

A 24-page tabloid section with all the action from the weekend's sporting action. Plus: the Monday interview in which a leading figure comes under the microscope, an unbeatable results service, gossip, speculation and fact from behind the scenes and the best in sports photography.

on Tuesday

Health: how wearing a virtual reality helmet could help cure phobias and other psychological problems. Plus: flaky nails are not simply a problem for the vain.

but a sign of ill-health, so what can be done about them? Also on Tuesday, fashion, architecture, visual arts and media.

on Wednesday

Budget Jones's diary continues to chronicle the encounters and exquisite embarrassments in the life of Britain's most-read spinster. Plus: the midweek travel section, your money, finance

and law. In our back pages, Martin Newell, Britain's leading rock poet, and Neil Kerber, one of the country's funniest cartoonists, present their views of the modern world.

on Thursday

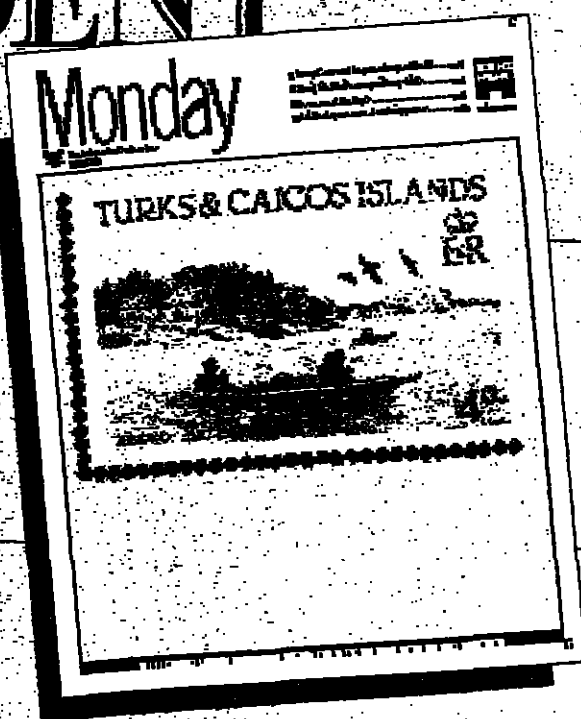
All our regular features, including Virginia Ironside's Dilemmas, John Walsh's column, plus film, education

and graduate plus. In the back pages, William Hartston's history of the world in 10 1/2 inches

on Friday

24Seven – a new 20-page pull-out-and-keep entertainment and listings section. Including a complete day-by-day planner for the week ahead, plus

seven-day TV, radio and satellite listings, ticket offers and informed comment on the week's highlights. Plus: eight pages of pop and classical music



IN BRIEF

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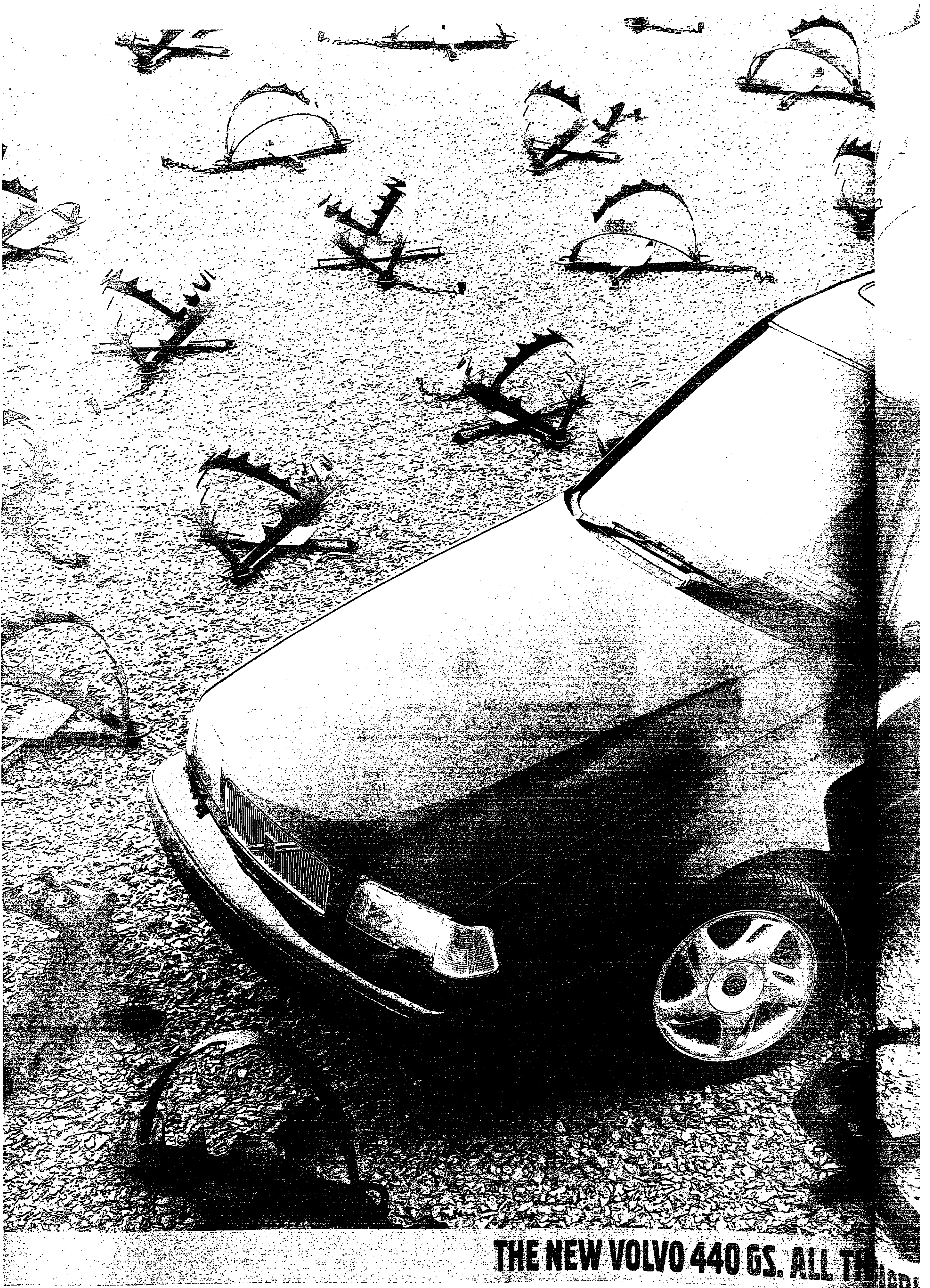
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THE NEW VOLVO 440 GS. ALL THE APPLI

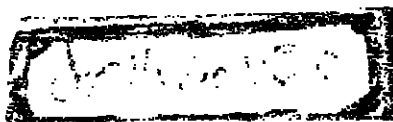
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Tony Blair's Victorian values

By Andrew Marr

Try to sum up what new Labour stand for, in a sentence. You can't. Tony Blair's politics, at once conservative and radical, pragmatic in purpose yet moral in tone, defy easy summation. Conservatives allege that this is a ploy to throw us off the scent; old Labour will soon emerge from beneath the smart disguise. The traditional left believes it already knows what Blair stands for: abject surrender to a conservative consensus.

Yet if new Labour were already fixed in stone, like a monument, it would be a political disaster in the making. New Labour's politics is confusing because it is still developing and learning, borrowing and stealing. It does not obey the laws of the old politics of left and right; it is happy to take from both. That elusiveness is a sign of its strength, but also a weakness, for it worries people who want to know where new Labour stands on vital issues such as tax and Europe.

This week, the *Independent* will subject new Labour to a thorough political audit. Our aim is not to work out what the party will do in detail in each area of policy. We want to uncover the values and the tensions that lie at the heart of Tony Blair's political ambitions. Andrew Marr's placement of new Labour within British political traditions today will be followed tomorrow by Polly Toynbee questioning the party's new social conservatism. On Wednesday, Hamish McRae will examine its conversion to capitalism, and on Thursday Yvette Cooper will ask whether Labour still believes in making society more equal. On Friday, we will deliver the *Independent's* judgement of new Labour.

The effect of new Labour on old Britain is most odd, like a gold-digging startlet latching on to a decrepit, suspicious old gentleman. The country is flattered by the young thing's attention, impressed despite itself. But under the flush of pleasure, there remains a leathery cynicism about what is coming next. We suspect it will end in tears and maybe betrayal. We think it will cost us. Yet the flirtation is fun and glamorous and a change from our weary marriage to the Tories – so what the hell!

Just using the word "glamorous" about Labour, without it seeming ridiculous, is a measure of how far Tony Blair has brought the party. To a degree which is both impressive and dangerous, new Labour is Tony Blair. He is not only the party leader but its spirit, its momentum, its public identity. His internal reshaping of Labour has smashed through the organisational barriers between the leader and the led. Looking ridiculously young, he gleams with self-confidence so brightly that everyone around him fades.

And if speeches brought enlightenment, Tony Blair would also be the best-understood politician of modern times. Explanation gushes from his office in an unstoppable flow. There are the speeches: Blair in New York, Blair in Tokyo, Blair in Singapore, Blair in the Savoy Hotel, and in Glasgow, and in Derby. There are the interviews: Blair on Frost, Blair on ITN, Blair in the *Sun*, Blair in the *Telegraph*... More remarkable still, almost every outing makes headlines. We get Blair on the middle classes; Blair on religion; Blair on morality; Blair on globalisation; Blair on Thatcher.

And yet, despite all this prose, the essence of Blair's new Labour remains hard to grasp. What, finally, is the party for? What would it really do? Everywhere we turn, it stands before us, hand outstretched, a brightly smiling enigma. We see him here, we read him there – but he's still that damn'd elusive Mr Blair.

The reason for his elusiveness is that new Labour is sending out different signals. Sometimes it seems that Blair is simply a conservative: that the Tories may be doing disastrously in the polls, but that Tory ideas are now utterly triumphant. Blair, after all, is a public school product, with traditionalist views on morality, education and the family. His political language adds to the impression. He uses old Tory slogans such as "One Nation". Recently he said: "I am a politician who works by instinct. I believe in enlightened self-interest."

On policy, too, he speaks in a way that would quite recently have been regarded as Conservative. Let's rehearse some of the most

important. Macro-economics? Speaking recently in New York, Blair was wholly orthodox, arguing that errors such as borrowing too much or allowing inflation to recur "will be punished rapidly and without mercy". Indeed, in some ways, the Tories are now marginally less orthodox on monetary policy than Labour, being hostile to giving the Bank of England entrenched independence and much more hostile to British membership of a single European currency, with all the rigid discipline that would involve.

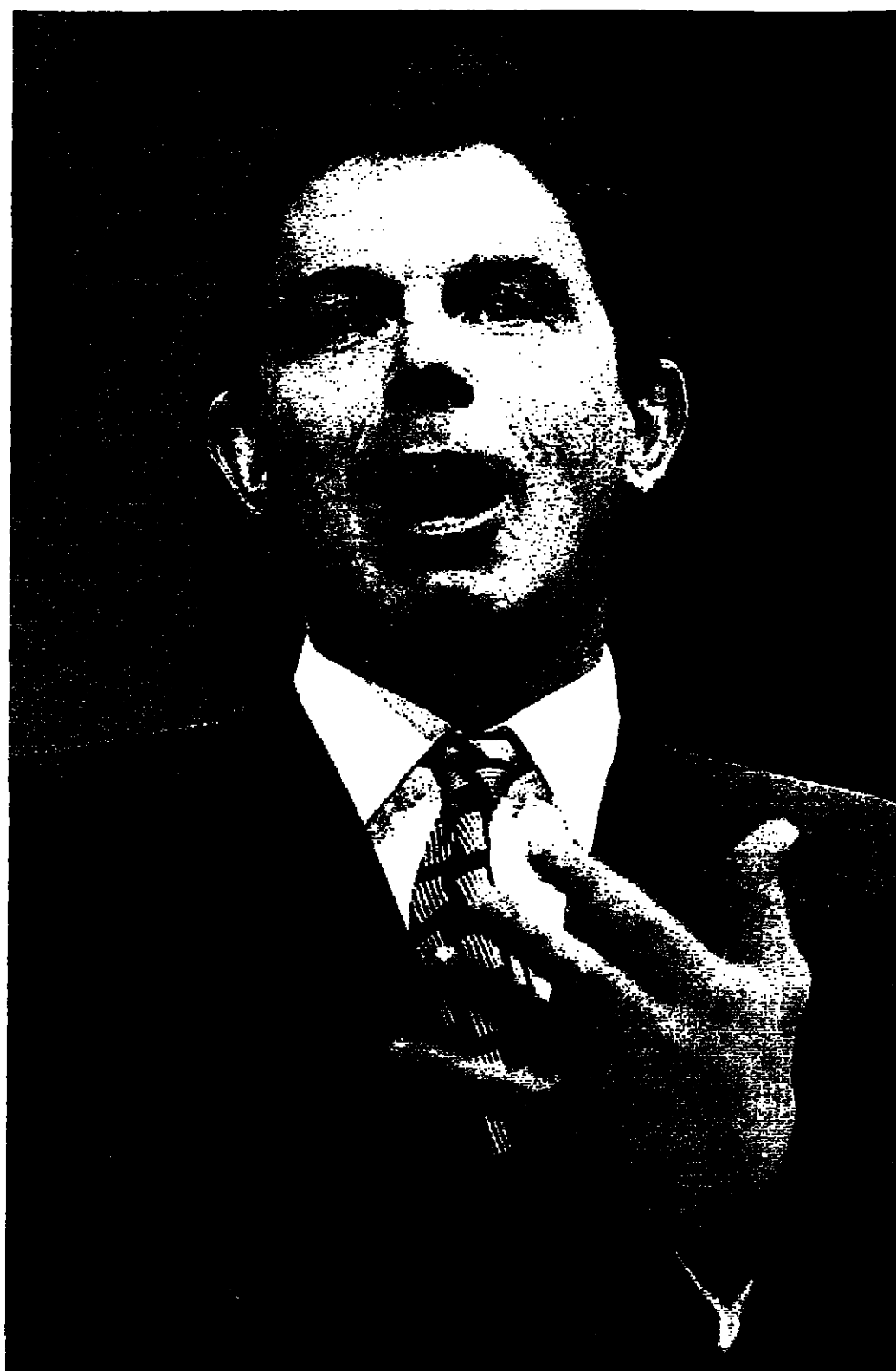
What about the great issue of globalisation, a prime source of the economic and social insecurity which Blair complains of? No, he is "passionately pro-free trade and anti-protectionist". In America, as in France and many other countries, there is now a strong protectionist backlash, composed of trade unionists, environmentalists, supporters of local development and some isolationists and nationalists. It is one of the

oddities of British politics that it is not represented here at all. New Labour is a leading part of the dominant free trade consensus.

On Europe, British relations with the US, nuclear weaponry and diplomacy generally, Blair sounds far more like a traditional centrist Tory of the Douglas Hurd type than like Labour in the Eighties. Crime and family values? There, of course, his instincts are celebratedly traditional. Tax, too: unlike earlier Labour leaders and some current frontbenchers, such as Clare Short, he doesn't make the case for taxation as a force for civilisation; he apologises for it, and promises restraint. One could go on: it isn't surprising that some people, from the Tory right to the Labour left, have simply concluded that if Blair so often speaks like a conservative, looks like a conservative and argues like a conservative, then that is what he is.

Others, though, hear a different tune. Here is a man who has committed himself to the most dramatic programme of political reform undertaken by any mainstream party leader. He calls himself a radical. His party's promises on lifting the tax burden on lower-income workers imply, though they don't yet say so, higher taxes for wealthier employees. He is committed to a minimum wage and to social protection of a kind that the Conservatives are hostile to. He promises investment, notably in lower class areas and an expansion both of nursery and of higher education; this must be funded somehow.

His Shadow Cabinet contains many more traditionalist Labour figures, and on the Labour backbenches there remain examples of – drop your voice – actual, real-life socialists. Abroad, though con-



servative in some ways, Blair's new Labour is much closer to the mainstream of European integration politics than real Conservatives. So others see Blair not as a conservative, but as the frontman for a subversive new leftism, the leader of a party that in power would put up taxes, re-regulate and go further in dismantling the old British constitution than any radical party has before.

It isn't surprising that voters are confused. Part of the problem, though, is that we are still asking the wrong questions. We are still influenced by the great struggle between socialism and capitalism which endured through most of this century. It made politics – at least in

theory – a fight between competing ideologies in battle to the death – a feature of at least the first part of the 20th century – has ended. It is a common new *sequitur* to believe that this diminishes political choice and renders all political alternatives the same. It doesn't. There will still be significant differences between political parties in values and priorities...

But the pot of specific policy prescriptions will be more often held in common. They may be used for different purposes and drawn by different motives, but the right and left hand will sometimes be dipping into the same pot.

Blair concluded that part of the disaffection from modern politics came from a failure to understand that the 20th-century clash of ideologies may have been the historical exception, not the rule: "Nine 19th-century politicians, curiously, would understand our development, political world more clearly."

About that, at any rate, he is surely right. A comparison of 19th-century politics is a useful perspective on new Labour. From Chartism to Gladstone's last administration, Victorian reformers had seen the old British constitution as one of their prime targets for change – just like new Labour. On economics, they also tended to sound fairly orthodox: pre-Keynesians and post-Keynesians sing the same song. Like Blair's, the Victorian radicalism of Bright or even Gladstone was high-minded affair, moralistic and evangelical about education and self-improvement. If, as it some times seems, new Labour has reduced almost all economic policy to education policy, this is an outcome that would have been readily understood by the Liberals of high Victorian Britain.

They were even conducting their politics against a backdrop of free trade and global transfers of capital and labour, worried about the efficiency of Germany and America, struggling with the social implications of new technologies, but rejecting protectionist answers. They would have recognised what Blair called in New York "a new age of anxiety, of insecurity, that is social and economic". The big difference, of course, was that Britain under Victoria was the world dominant imperial power, infinitely stronger than she is under the second Elizabeth. That is a huge gap; but a politics that isn't based on huge ideological conflict, but on arguments about national modernisation, links the two periods.

That sort of perspective needed to even begin making sense of new Labour. But it is only a start. It doesn't answer the biggest question of all about Blair: which is whether a politician committed to all the great forces of modern times, including liberalisation and globalisation, can find local British answers for the age's anxiety. Can a better education and training system, funded with out new borrowing and much higher taxes, bring two million people back into work? Labour's new radicalism on political reform strong enough to empower local authorities and communities, reviving some of the provincial enterprise that made Victorian Britain? Will it really help the poor, or turn it back on them? Is this now a disciplined party capable of winning and holding power for more than a few years before crumbling?

These are the important, down-to-earth questions. But they can only be answered by experience. Labour in power. If Blair's flirtation with Britain is consummated, perhaps this year, perhaps next, the confusion about new Labour may quickly evaporate. We will need to ask whether he is really, conservatively or really a radical; his works will we know him.



DIARY

No problems with us then, old boy?

With both the Government and the Opposition pledged to come down on any teachers that don't make the grade, nearly every school in the country lives in fear of the Ofsted inspection. Every school except one. Wallington School in Kent is to be inspected this term, but, I suspect, it has no qualms at all about the inspectors liking what they see.

Among its old boys is Christopher Woodhead (below), no doubt once the terror of the lower fourth but now better known as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. I have been sent a copy of the headmaster's report made at the school's awards ceremony at the end of last term, in which Wallington's head, Dr Martin Haworth, recalled that Chris Woodhead revisited his alma mater last year. Dr Haworth recalled that "carried away by the honours and achievements of pupils, or by the nostalgia of his first visit to the school since boyhood, or in a rare moment of lucidity from writing official reports, he declared that 'Wallington is the best school in the country'."

The remark had been duly relayed to the local Ofsted inspector, Dr Haworth noted. In good headmasterly style, he added: "What is more important is the boy coming through and the man close behind." Absolutely. But when the chief inspector of schools says it is the best school in the country in advance of an official inspection, that's worth a few house points too.

'Pornographer' and the columnist's daughter

Michael Grade, chief executive of Channel 4, has been given a rough time in the columns of the *Daily Mail* in recent

times. Labelled "Britain's pornographer-in-chief" repeatedly by the columnist Paul Johnson, purportedly for showing risqué material on his channel, the label seems to have been taken up in the news columns of the paper and attached to Mr Grade whenever his name is mentioned. Mr Johnson's distaste for the alleged pornographer appears profound. So one can imagine Mr Grade's surprise when his executives told him that Paul Johnson had asked if Mr Grade would give his daughter some career advice as she wished to go into television.

Lineswoman gets the red card

Pity 34-year-old Nellie Viernot. A lineswoman at international level for the



Fascist chic at the Waldorf

As Shakespeare so neatly said: "The party's the thing." I'm looking forward to the gala charity premiere of the new *Richard III* film on Tuesday. The film, starring Sir Ian McKellen and Kristin Scott Thomas, is set in the 15th century, with Sir Ian's excellent Richard a fascist-style ruler. After seeing the film, we will all retire to the Waldorf Hotel for a themed buffet supper and dance. The dress code is "Thirties glamour". For *Richard III*? Wouldn't the Tower of London in blood-red tunic be more appropriate? But never let the plot get in the way of a good party. Now is the winter of our discontent

Fashionable backing for the euro

The great European beauty contest is hotting up. In a bid for the Continent's hearts and minds, Chancellor Kohl has signed up the kind of cheekbones to win over even the hardest Euro-sceptic. Step forward the latest spokesperson for the single European currency – the supermodel Claudia Schiffer (right).

She has been enlisted to promote a positive attitude to the euro among her country folk. And who better, after all, to educate the public on an issue of such grave importance?

Michael Portillo, presumably, will be gnashing his perfectly formed teeth at the prospect of such a glamorous opponent. Perhaps the anti-Euro camp should quit plotting in Parliament altogether, sign up Kate Moss and Naomi Campbell, and leave them all to fight the matter out on the catwalks.

Warning: postal chess is a dangerous game

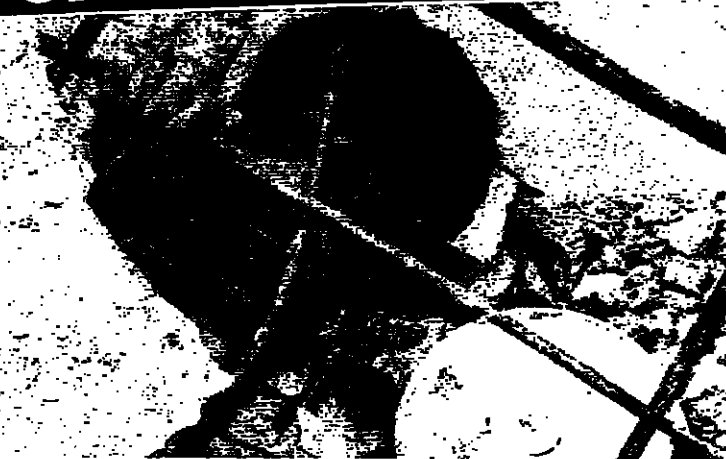
Here is another activity to add to the list of dangerous sports. Kenneth Harman, 49, of London, has been advised by his doctor to cut down on his strenuous pastime following a recent heart attack.

And what is this hazardous hobby? Mr Harman is one of Britain's leading players of postal chess, which can progress at the palpitating pace of a move every week.

Our sources close to the *British Chess Magazine*, where we read the story, tell us that it's waiting for the postman that causes the palpitations.

Eagle Eye

CRISIS IN LEBANON



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Within minutes of Thursday's shelling of the U.N. base near Tyre in Southern Lebanon, Red Cross staff were helping to evacuate and treat young Ibrahim Abed al-Ayan and the other wounded. We made emergency deliveries of dressings and IV fluids to overcrowded hospitals. And a Red Cross convoy brought food, medical supplies and more doctors and nurses to provide essential medical care in Tyre and Sidon.

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Rooting out the abusers

We failed them as children, and we are failing them still. Over the past 25 years, hundreds of children entrusted to the care of the state have been raped and assaulted, bullied and abused by the adults appointed in loco parentis to care for them. The authorities who worked on their behalf to license and regulate these institutions, to recruit and train the workers who staffed them, failed in their duty to look and listen to the cries of children who endured terrible tortures.

Today, at least 10 police forces are investigating claims of abuse in children's homes. Yet even when abuse is uncovered, it is often left to the victims. Reports are censored, scandals covered up and survivors' families abuse lack the support they need to pursue justice. Worst of all, as our sister paper the *Independent* on Sunday made clear yesterday, we have not acted on the most important lessons from recent scandals.

The systematic violence against innocent children that emerges from these investigations is shocking. Many of these cases are run by the public authorities (name: in practice they are exploited by networks of paedophiles. More than 100 very young children were abused by Frank Beck in Leicestershire between 1973 and 1978. Staffordshire's infamous "pinning of the owl" regime led to the abuse of a further 150 children between 1983 and 1989. In addition to at least 100 children abused in Chwyd, North Wales, and 60 or more in Islington, north London. Sadly these would be just the tip of the iceberg.

Leicestershire police have begun the biggest inquiry ever into child abuse interviewing almost 2,000 former residents.

These last two inquiries, in Chwyd and Islington, must be published. We have an obligation to face up to the crimes committed against children by public servants, the chain of officials, professionals and

politicians who failed to stop the abuse must be held to account. The councillors in North Wales who tried to shield the Chwyd report from public scrutiny were wrong. As they draft a new version for publication, they must not censor significant findings.

Most important, the Government and local authorities must implement the many lessons from these reports. If a GP deliberately made a patient ill, he would be struck off the medical register. A lawyer caught using professional knowledge to defraud her clients would not be allowed to practise again.

People who look after children – especially the vulnerable and disturbed children who are placed in care – have far more power than GPs or doctors. Yet they remain largely unregulated; abusers are still able to move from one position of trust to another, leaving a trail of distraught children behind them. The Government should establish a general social services council to act as a professional and disciplinary body for care workers – similar to those in medicine and the law. There are bound to be practical difficulties in determining how far to spread the professional net. For example, should foster parents be included alongside the managers of residential homes? But these are not insurmountable obstacles.

This is an urgent task. Vulnerable members of the community, whether they be children, the elderly, or the chronically sick, all depend on the honour and professionalism of care workers. As community care expands, the Government should make sure it is able to regulate and register care workers to ensure those in care are better protected. If we fail to act now, as Allan Levy argues on the facing page, we will be guilty of a gross dereliction of duty towards some of the most vulnerable members of our society.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lebanon: 'pusillanimous' reaction of politicians

Sir: As a Parliamentary visitor to Qana at the time that the shelling started nine days ago I welcome your condemnation of the utterly disproportionate Israeli response to Hizbollah with its inevitable result ("Israel must call off the killing", 19 April).

In their desire to see the election of Shimon Peres, the West blatantly refuses to understand why Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri will not and, at this stage, cannot silence Hizbollah. The occupation of south Lebanon is illegal under international law. Hizbollah has parliamentary representation, and their support, inevitably, thrives under military attack. The dominant Syrians together with Mr Hariri remain confident that they will be able to exercise that control once Israel has withdrawn from Lebanese territory. It is only on this basis that peace can be achieved.

As Britain voted for the original Security Council resolution it is sad to see British politicians so pusillanimous in upholding it. Moral outrage combined with excessive understanding of the Israeli position amounts to acquiescence to a deliberate attack on a UN base which was a known refuge. It is not sufficient to condemn the loss of life – for who could disagree with that? Condemnation of Israel for the reckless irresponsibility of their action in Qana, their contempt for the UN shown in the preparedness to kill UN troops and their whole Grapes of Wrath strategy would be more appropriate.

Can we ever again suggest that Government or, indeed, Parliament takes an even-handed view of Middle East issues?

JOHN GUNNELL MP
(Morley & Leeds South, Lab)
House of Commons
London SW1

Sir: In his report on Israeli military action in the Lebanon (20 April) Robert Fisk asks what

world Uri Dromi, the Israeli Government's chief spokesman, is living in.

Certainly he is in a world apart from southern Lebanon which is now bearing the brunt of the unchanging nature of Israeli military doctrine. There he could see practical demonstration of that doctrine as enunciated by David Ben-Gurion in his 1948 War Diary: "There is no question as to whether a reaction is necessary or not... What is necessary is cruel and strong reactions. We need precision in time, place and casualties. If we know the family – strike mercilessly, women and children included. Otherwise the action is inefficient. At the place of action there is no need to distinguish between guilty and innocent..."

ST JOHN ARMSTRONG
Wells, Somerset

Sir: Naomi Katz (Letters, 17 April) asks whether the British Government would stand idly by if "the IRA was bombing buses and throwing Katyusha rockets into your backyard".

I don't believe that even the most rabid Tory backwoodsman has advocated that the British government should shell large areas of West Belfast or launch air strikes on Dublin to fight the IRA.

For Ms Katz to attempt to justify the shelling of civilians by claiming that Hizbollah is "linked in purpose" with the suicide bombers of Hamas, is further to confuse the issue. The conditions for the rocket attacks have grown directly out of the Israeli occupation by proxy of southern Lebanon. Equally, the conditions for Hizbollah to develop as a military power have been created by Israel's decision to treat Lebanon as merely another arena for its conflict with the Palestinians, and its refusal to respect the rights of the Lebanese people.

MIKE SHALLCROSS
London SE22

Undeniable need for research investment

Sir: David Harrison's analysis of the crisis in university research is spot on (17 April). For many research projects the crisis will prove terminal unless the government reverses the 50 per cent cut in capital funding that it inflicted on universities in the last budget.

However, Dr Harrison's solution to the problems that he identifies unfortunately reflects the defeatist attitude that has so badly hampered the universities' ability to defend themselves against government vandalism and public indifference. Directing research funding into fewer and fewer universities (inevitably followed by the most talented staff and students) brings to mind deckchairs and the Titanic. Explicitly denying staff in the vast majority of the university system access to public funding for their research is an arbitrary denial of their intellectual creativity and a "trade constraint" in their professional activities. Is past performance really the only way to identify excellence? Where are the new ideas and the new researchers to come from?

The case for increased investment in research is undeniable. Let us say so, not try to sew patches on the policies that have done so much damage to our universities.

DR JOANNA DE GROOT
President
Association of University Teachers
London W11

Sir: David Harrison's proposals to reverse the decline in Britain's research quality by increasing the concentration of funds in a relatively few universities is nothing more than a ringing endorsement of the Matthew principle: "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

He points out himself that research resources are already very unevenly distributed in Britain. In fact, for years they have been more concentrated on a smaller proportion of universities than in the US or Germany, our more successful research competitors. The inevitable conclusion has to be drawn that his remedy has already been applied, tested, and found wanting.

Rather than adopting the defeatist position that the only thing to do is to fight amongst themselves, British universities should be out there persuading the public that investment in research pays – not only in national prestige from Nobel prizes – but in a better quality of life and a stronger economy.

Professor HUGH PENNINGTON
Department of Medical Microbiology
University of Aberdeen

Sir: Dr Mulvey (Letters, 19 April) of Save British Science puts the

case well for more support for the nation's science in its universities. The fact that his organisation exists says much for the state we are in.

As a practising scientist and head of a top-rated research institution in the University of London (which exists also to teach), I have personally and professionally borne the brunt of the government's unprecedented reduction in funding.

Not all research is costly, but the concentration of money into larger and larger grants for fewer scientists makes it so. Let us not accept the wisdom that big in research is better, that bigger grants are more productive, but let us understand the human side of science. It is not some activity for a few on whom the sun has shone. It is a daily function of academics and industrial scientists and it needs its foot soldiers and data gatherers as well as its visionaries and generals. We destroy not only the diversity of contributions from individual researchers at our peril we also, by starving the many of funds, destroy morale.

As a nation we have the funds to build 40 new prisons while our universities crumble. How much more can we do for our universities?

Professor A T FLORENCE
The School of Pharmacy
University of London
London WC1

A manifesto for the monarchy

iz McColgan's storming win in the London marathon should inspire us not least that other long-distance runner, Elizabeth Windsor.

The Queen spent her 70th birthday quelling the kind of display of dignity and ordinariness that can do the monarchy harm. Yet if she is to celebrate her 80th birthday in more style, she will need to go a good deal further in restoring the Royal Family's public standing.

The divorce of the Duke and Duchess of York and of the Prince and Princess of Wales will clear the decks. But her sons' marriages are only part of her problem. The real trouble is much wider than that. Our society is being remade by some powerful forces: it is becoming more diverse and less deferential, more international and less patient. It is those changes at really threaten the monarchy by making it seem outdated, slow-moving, irrelevant.

The depth of respect for the Queen and Queen Mother will ensure that the real test for the monarchy will not come soon. The real test will come with the accession.

Prince Charles has sometimes given the impression he would rather retreat into a garden than be King, an attitude that flies in the face of the monarchy's role. Why should we be? Republicanism is not on the agenda of serious politics. Yet, but if the Royal Family does not stick it together, it may be a different story in 20 years' time (which counts as

the short run in the monarchy business).

The monarchy's public standing will not be restored through appeals to history or folklore. The case will not be won by totting up the commercial benefits of royal-related tourism. The monarchy will only prosper if it finds a way of knitting itself into the fabric of a fast-moving, plural, sceptical society.

The Royal Family's role is not to compete with pop stars in the glamour stakes. Its main job is not constitutional. It should position itself as the prime defender of the dignified part of society by standing for decency, duty, service and self-sacrifice. The way it can best achieve that is through following the lead of Princess Anne's impressive, determined charity work. That is the model Prince Charles should follow.

The monarchy has a difficult trick to pull off. It is a self-consciously old-fashioned institution. It cannot survive without clothing itself in the past. Yet the royals have to find a way of identifying themselves with the current, the modern, without debasing the currency of royalty. The way to pull off that trick is to capitalise on the anti-artist tenor of our times by identifying with the non-state voluntary sector. In this consumerist age the other thing that people like is have spelled out to them what they are being offered: the Queen could do worse than issue a manifesto for the modern monarchy with a commitment to the voluntary sector as its centrepiece.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

BBC's jazz coverage gives me the blues



MILES KINGSTON

There was once a great Scottish clarinetist called Sandy Brown who spent a lot of his time writing to the BBC asking why their policy on jazz was so mean and ignorant. He also spent a lot of time writing perceptive pieces in the literature weekly magazine run by the BBC, the *Lit-Prog*, back in the days when the BBC nised literature weekly magazines and not just consumerist publications aimed at those interested in holidays, cooking and string quartets. If you ever come across a second-hand copy of Sandy Brown's posthumously collected writings, *The McJazz Manuscripts*, get it – it's a real treat for a witty and rich treat.

Here is the start of one such letter to the then BBC chairman, Sir Michael Swann.

Dear Sir Michael,

BBC Coverage of Jazz Music

I've written before, over a period of 10 years, about the abysmally small amount of jazz given to this art form. I found myself doing so that there is nobody responsible in the Corporation for handling the jazz – at least nobody who has any knowledge or experience of it. Such 'concern' as I received displayed an appalling ignorance about the subject...

Its latest act of meanness is to relegate jazz to such a late hour that nobody will bother to listen. The most regular of the very few BBC jazz programmes, a half hour called *Jazz Notes*, has just been moved from Radio 2 to Radio 3 and to a ridiculous time of 12.30am, when most people are fast asleep. Does the BBC really hold to its ancient belief that jazz people are night animals, just moving into their best and most alert hours after midnight? Or is it more likely that the BBC, fulfilling some ancient duty to put on a bit of jazz, puts it on at a time when nobody else in the BBC needs the airwaves, regardless of the fact that nobody will be listening? So we get *Jazz Notes* thrown into a dustbin hour?

The BBC has already established the principle that it will treat the jazz audience like dummies by its use of the BBC Big Band. The BBC Big Band is a highly polished outfit play-

ing a kind of well-drilled museum archive big band swing that not many jazz fans would go out of their way to listen to. And yet very often, when I switch on *Jazz Notes* to hear what's happening, I find that half the music is provided by the BBC Big Band.

Well, I don't want to listen to the bloody BBC Big Band. I want to listen to some jazz. I don't want someone at the BBC to shrug off its commitment to the BBC Big Band by saying, "Oh well, we'll put them into one of the jazz slots – nobody will ever complain, especially if it's on so late that nobody's listening anyway."

And not only that – I also think that the late hour is beginning to affect the mental state of those on the programme. Digby Fairweather, the main presenter, has been so far affected by the late hours that he has taken to saying "Absolutely!" whenever he means "Yes". And he was recently involved in this rather odd exchange with Campbell Burnap.

Burnap: Do you know there's an amazing statistic came up recently? – an American writer says that today 91 per cent of living Americans have no memories of the 1930s at all?

Fairweather: Gosh, that's frightening, isn't it? Don't you think so?

Burnap: Well, we don't either, but we love the music.

Fairweather: So we do!

I work it out that in order to have memories of the 1930s you'd have to be well into your sixties: so what all that means, if anything, is that 91 per cent of living Americans are not yet well into their sixties, which doesn't seem too frightening to me. Nor do I think it would have seemed frightening to Digby Fairweather if he was allowed to broadcast on jazz during normal waking hours. I fear for his sanity if he is kept up past his bedtime so often.

Before I leave the subject of BBC idiocy, I also fear for the sanity of those who compile Channel 4 listings in the *Radio Times*. The other day we were promised a brief book review of a new life of Bertrand Russell, offered by Harry Carpenter. Thousands of boxing fans must have been disappointed to switch on and find Humphrey Carpenter instead. The *Radio Times* also previewed Channel 4's *The Girl Club* on Saturday, in which Reggie Nadelson investigates expensive American strip clubs. "He asks," says the *Radio Times*, "if the men may only look but not touch, what is the real attraction?"

He? HE? At the time of going to press Reggie Nadelson was a woman. Oh, well – maybe the person who does the Channel 4 listings also handles the BBC radio jazz policy.

Reading English

Sir: I can tell Trevor McDonald how to induce the young to speak and write good English. As a child I was lonely, since there were no playmates nearby and my much older siblings were at boarding school. I was deprived of television (not yet invented), radio (the parental set was not available to me) and cinema (non-existent locally), so my absorbing passion was reading the books in my nursery, books borrowed from school or grown-up books in the parental library. The result was that I automatically and painlessly learnt how to spell, write and speak grammatical and coherent English.

ALICE H BIRD
Henley-on-Thames

Unreal image

Sir: Janet Falush maintains that we should be grateful for those who live on benefit, since the economic system we have does not share out work equitably (Letters, 12 April).

Most of the people I know who claim benefit as unemployed are also busily working in the black economy, and the remainder are engaged in criminal activities.

While this may be a reflection on the type of people I know, I suggest that the image of claimants happily doing nothing with their time is unreal, and a low-wage earner like myself is bound to resent the fact that many claimants have a total income greater than mine, by one means and another.

JOHN HEATON
Bradford

Club members

Sir: The "club" of septuagenarian British monarchs is not quite as exclusive as your correspondent Peter Prior suggests (letter, 20 April). He has forgotten King William IV, who died on 20 June 1837, aged 71.

DAVID T ROBERTS
Bristol

Bug-winner

Sir: I would like to award 10 out of 10 for effort to Dr David Winterbourne for his suggestion to beat the Millennium Bug (Letters, 20 April). Although his solution might work in a number of cases, there is a lot of software in use for which the original programming language code no longer exists. In these situations, it would be impossible to add his bug-fix to the software.

I, like many others, see the Millennium Bug as a godsend rather than a problem. As a freelance software engineer, the bug is likely to provide me with work for at least the next four years.

PHIL ROGERS
Dorchester, Dorset

The price of music

Sir: Imagine someone applying for a job as a typist and being told that before they are seen a sum of money has to be given to the boss. Outrageous? This is the dilemma most musicians have to face – even if they have a degree and even if they are a member of the musicians' union. Pay to play – no other way.

BENEDICT HEANEY
Manchester

comment

Animal rights can damage your health

Vital medical research – and the safety of scientists – is threatened by the rise of the anti-vivisectionists

This is Laboratory Animal Awareness Week. On Saturday, at a rally in Trafalgar Square, people brought flowers to lay at the feet of giant animal silhouettes marking the numbers of animals used in British laboratories.

The great majority of those who will be supporting the week or keeping a minute's silence for dead animals will no doubt be gentle animal-lovers horrified by pictures of monkeys with electrodes implanted in their brains or kittens with their eyes stitched up. But they also include supporters of more violent acts: animal rights attacks have been increasing – 622 in 1993, 934 in 1994, and likely to be up again for last year.

A few examples: Dr David White, immunologist, works on what may be the best hope for future transplants. He breeds pigs with a human gene which may produce unlimited organs for transplantation into humans without rejection. But his home has been wrecked three times, with "murderers" plastered in red paint across his sitting room walls. Then, despite every kind of security device, they put a hose through a skylight and left water pouring through for a whole weekend. Now the whereabouts of his laboratory is exceedingly secret. When he was working with Sir Roy Calne, the transplant surgeon, on the ground-breaking immuno-suppressant Cyclosporin A, a large bomb very nearly blew the hands off this distinguished surgeon.

Dr White says, "A lot of the protesters are very genuine, but dreadfully mis-

informed. I get these volunteers calling me, reading out a script prepared by their organisers. Recently I had a sweet old lady reading out abusive four-letter words she was plainly very uncomfortable with. So we talked and she told me she was on drugs for her rheumatism that her GP promised her were not tested on animals. I explained to her that this was utter nonsense. All drugs have to be tested on animals for safety. People are misled by propaganda."

Professor Colin Blakemore, an outspoken defender of the use of animals, has been a frequent target. The last attack was at Christmas, when his children handled a parcel that turned out to be a bomb. Dr Vernon Coleman, the rabid anti-vivisectionist columnist in the *People*, had to be restrained by the courts from publishing Professor Blakemore's home address. Once Dr Coleman filled a double-page spread in the *Sun* with provocative lists of animal researchers, including work by Professor Terry Partridge at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School. Professor Partridge says: "It printed who we were, where we could be found, and grossly misrepresented our work on muscle disease, saying we used animals unnecessarily. We do use mice with muscular dystrophy for our research, because we have to."

Andrew Blake, 33, is in a wheelchair due to the wasting disease Friedrich's Ataxia. He founded a group called The Seriously Ill for Medical Research, backed by Stephen Hawking and others. He has nearly 400 members with



POLLY TOYNEEBE

'A lot of protesters are genuine but dreadfully misinformed'

diseases that might be cured through animal research. But he too regularly receives threats, the latest of which read, "Your support for vivisection makes you a target. You have been warned."

What effect has all this had on the progress of science? Some say it has at least tightened the rules, stopped some cavalier animal research and made scientists more gentle and careful. It has raised the cost of animal research, ensuring that scientists try every other method first. However, the Medical Research Council, Professor Blakemore, Dr White and many others say that the campaign has done great harm.

Britain has by far the most stringent laws in the world on laboratory animals. The anti-vivisectionists have forced laws on to the statute books that now make animal research so difficult

that more of it is going abroad. Development of new drugs and medical treatments is one of the few fields in which Britain excels. Yet the 1986 Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act and the 20 different sets of advice, codes of practice and guidelines that the Home Office has produced since then are now seriously impeding progress. Ten of these regulations have come in since 1994, indicating the growing influence of the animal lobbyists. These new regulations have cost universities millions of pounds – "Money that would have been far better spent on more research," says Professor Blakemore. "The regulations on temperature, air flow and living conditions are far more stringent than laws on working conditions for humans." The Research Defence Society (RDS) estimates that implementing just one 1992 Code of Practice cost £800m.

Researchers complain of the huge bureaucracy. The RDS says it now takes months to get a permit, and then requires monthly written reports to the Home Office. "We are seeing researchers turning abroad in frustration." All projects need three separate licences – one for the research itself, certifying its worth and ensuring that as few animals as possible are used. Then the lab has to be licensed, with trained keepers and a vet on call. Then each scientist doing the work needs another licence, requiring an extra compulsory training course and exam.

"It means," says Professor Blakemore, "that even the most distinguished foreign Nobel prize-winner coming to Britain to collaborate on a project is not allowed to do so because they are not licensed. You can hardly ask them to take a course and a written exam, so they don't come. Instead, we have to move the research abroad."

Professor Partridge gives an example of the problems: he was working on grafting normal muscle cells on to mice with muscular dystrophy. He wanted to take the mice to Belgium for the second part of a collaborative research programme. But Home Office rules say no lab animals can be taken abroad, so the whole experiment was done in Belgium instead. The Animal Procedures Committee is conducting a review of the 1986 Act, filling researchers with dread of yet more restriction to come.

Dr Max Headley, who uses animals for his work on painkillers, was blown up in his car in 1990 but luckily escaped injury. "One of the worst effects of anti-vivisectionism has been most eminent scientists' unwillingness to stand up and explain their work. We have a deeply anti-science culture here compared with Europe, and we need to make the case for it, but people don't dare put their heads above the parapet."

On this occasion, though, the National Anti-Vivisection Society, organisers of Laboratory Animal Awareness Week, were the ones who failed to speak up. Countless calls requesting a conversation with a spokesperson or a fax of their leaflets yielded nothing at all from them.

My daft learned friend: shut up!

Martin Mears, head of the Law Society, has dubbed women 'the enemy'. Eileen Pembridge replies

It is becoming increasingly difficult to read newspaper reports of the public utterances of Martin Mears, president of the Law Society, because it is increasingly obvious that they are given such prominence only because he is the elected leader of our profession and therefore shows us all up in a poor light. It is the latest, subtle twist to lawyer-bashing.

When I was asked to write a riposte to his "arguments" on women and the law in his speech to women lawyers at a conference on Saturday, I hesitated on the basis that, in framing a rebuttal, I was dignifying those motley pontifications with a label they did not merit. I cannot imagine for a moment that any paper would give even one column-inch to his views on the "zealotry" of women if he did not hold his current position.

It is his prominence which earns him the coverage – at our expense – and I am fed up with the sight of chattering journalists barely able to contain their glee at having such copy to play with at otherwise serious and worthy gatherings. It is not, after all, the tenets of the Flat Earth Society that call for coverage – it is the discovery that the editor of the *National Geographic* is a card-carrying member of it.

Thus it is with us. Pity the poor solicitor – underpaid and undervalued as a conveyancer, ground down and abused for long unpaid hours on legal aid work – and now a clown for a leader, one who holds out forcefully that there is no discrimination against women, no prejudice, no glass ceiling, no sexual harassment, no problem – save our own Machiavellian perceptions.

Over the past year or so several surveys have highlighted women's frustration, fear, or ire, at being held back, channelled into traditionally female fields of work, denied partnerships, at being sexually harassed or demeaned, at facing the old choice of being a "lad" (down the pub or up the club) or opting out. Women with children usually come off worst.

Mears denies any of this. He points to the fact that today half of those solicitors under 30 are women and revels at dismissing the figures showing them going so far and no further. He says that women should be at home tending their families, not "showing their way to the top", and he plays on male fears of maternity leave and unjust accusations of sexual harassment. He moves on to lambast what he calls the whole dis-

crimination industry. The logic is flawed but the rhetoric gets him the headlines. The dilemma then is whether to ignore him or take him on. Never mind that it is our profession's fault that he got to be our leader – it seems that many were so keen for a change at election time that they forgot to look at what change was going to produce.

Martin Mears loves every minute of it. What better way to spend a Saturday morning if you do not like women (as peers and colleagues, you understand) than to be given a platform to taunt them, wind them up, insult them (knowing the press will lap it up), to shame us in front of the Bar,

The women were philosophical: most shrugged and simply said 'weird'

bounce around being unrepentant and revel in the *enfant terrible* role while annoying so many women lawyers at one go.

One is inevitably left wondering at the personality that holds these views in the face of the evidence. One ponders how such highly personal attitudes towards women (which I see mirrored in his dealings with the Society) could come to be elevated to a credo or reported as news.

On Saturday, he dubbed all 400 of us "the enemy". The women attending were generally philosophical – we are accustomed, after all, to making allowances for the male egos, the embittered, the patronising and the arrogant. Most shrugged and simply said "weird", and perhaps were glad to be reminded why they felt the need to be at the conference in the first place.

I have no hope that Martin Mears will ever change. This time it fell to another man, the leader of the Bar, to shrug off Mears's constant taunts of "political correctness" and tell him he was wrong. I hope that come the next election time, Mears will reap the whirlwind of his daft and offensive views on women and that the bulk of our profession will tell him that the joke's over.

The writer is a council member of the Law Society and stood against Martin Mears for the presidency of the Law Society in 1995.

Our dereliction of duty

Child abuser Frank Beck said it all in 1991: children in care are still at risk. By Allan Levy QC

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child carries enormous authority because it has been ratified by more than 180 countries, including Britain. It binds the Government to take all appropriate measures to protect children from abuse in all its forms, particularly sexual abuse. One area in which the Government is plainly failing to act effectively is in respect of some of Britain's most vulnerable and disturbed children in residential care homes.

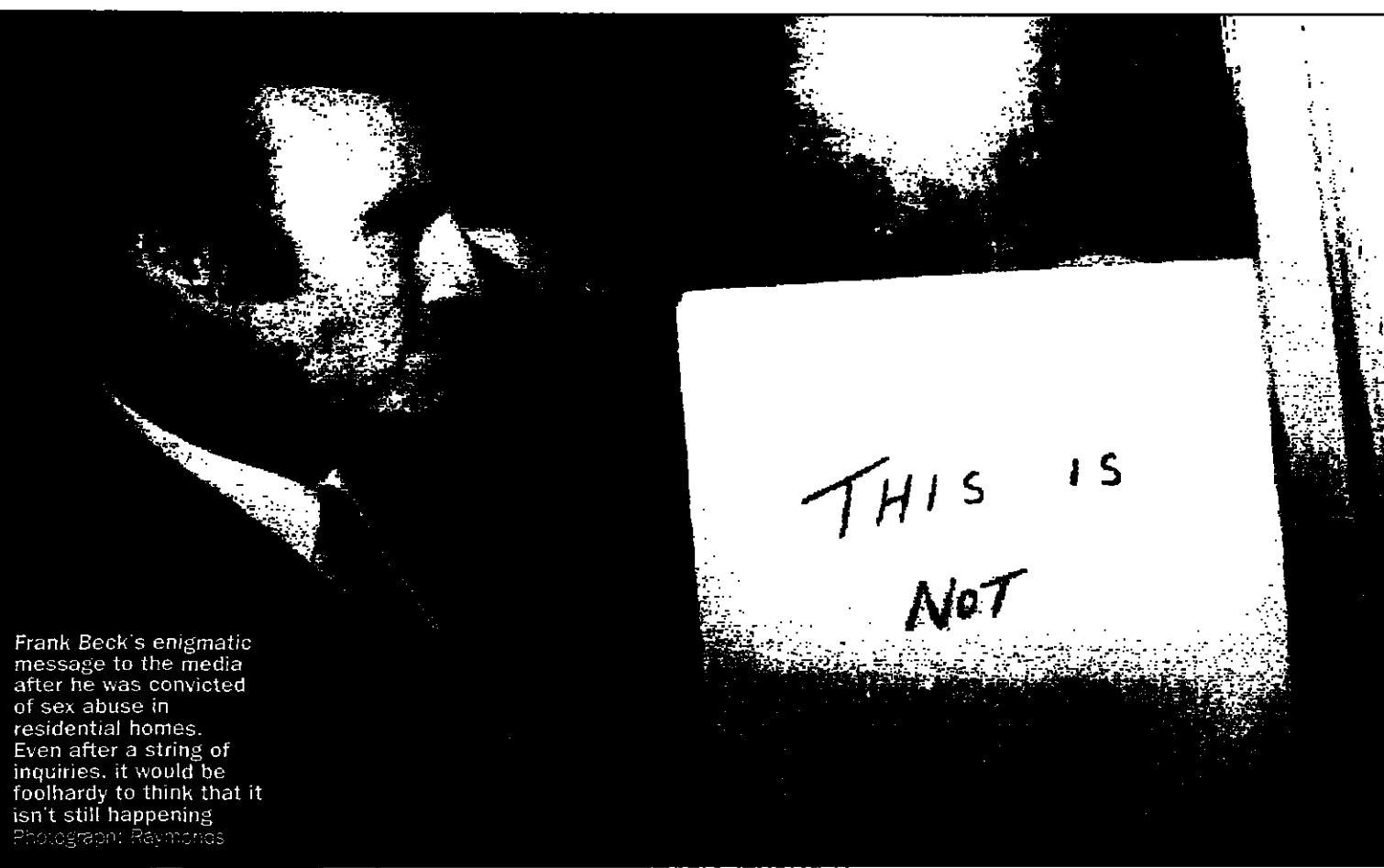
Scandal after scandal has surfaced since the pioneering "pin-down" inquiry in Staffordshire five years ago. Recommendations have been made, committees and support groups set up, and much said by politicians. The reality, however, is that today a child in residential care may well be a child in danger.

The Staffordshire inquiry in 1990 put a searchlight for the first time on children's homes. The uncovering of an unlawful regime of restraint, involving isolation, humiliation and confrontation in so-called "pin-down" rooms, received huge media coverage. A wide range of recommendations were made, covering recruitment, training and supervision of staff, conditions in the homes, inspections, complaints procedures, methods of restraint, protection from sex offenders and standards of child care.

These were considered to be issues of national importance, and the protection of children from abusers was highlighted. The report produced national shock waves and triggered an upsurge of interest in and concern about the whole field of residential child care. Local authorities were instructed to check their homes for similar problems and to report to the Secretary of State for Health within one month.

At the request of the Government, Sir William Utting, then Chief Inspector of the Social Services Inspectorate, produced urgently a review of residential child care. He concluded in August 1991 that it was an "indispensable service", and that the homes needed to be managed, inspected and monitored carefully and staffed with professionally qualified personnel. He noted that one of the major problems was that the residential care of children was commonly regarded "as an unimportant, residual activity", whereas the reality was very different. He also pointed out that 70 per cent of the staff employed in homes lacked a relevant qualification.

Following the Utting report, the Children's Homes Regulations 1991 were brought in, an expert group was set up to examine appropriate training, and the Home Office considered residential staff. Howe recommended major improvements in management, including a requirement that external managers should be experienced or trained in residential care. The topics



Frank Beck's enigmatic message to the media after he was convicted of sex abuse in residential homes. Even after a string of inquiries, it would be foolhardy to think that it isn't still happening. Photograph: Raymonds

of supervision and training, support of staff under stress and better career opportunities were again considered.

Further abuse that came to light in 1992 and 1993 in Wales (Ty Mawr), Sheffield and Leicestershire deepened the concern about children in residential care and reinforced the urgent need for the recommendations already made to be implemented. After the Utting report, the then minister for health, Virginia Bottomley, said that the Government accepted the thrust of all the recommendations and "would be taking action forward urgently to make the best use of available resources".

The Leicestershire inquiry, which covered sexual abuse of children by Frank Beck between 1973 and 1986, went over by now familiar ground, including failures regarding recruitment of staff, complaints and investigation procedures. The report noted that "it would not be wise for anyone to approach this report on the basis that if all happened a long time ago and that nothing like it could ever happen again". The Leicester inquiry led to the Warner Commission considering in particular selection and recruitment methods and criteria for staff working in children's homes.

The Warner report expressed concern that "there have been so many

inquiries whose findings seem to have gone largely unheeded by the service as a whole". That report noted that there were far too many examples of poor management and that it was essential that management, staffing levels, training and support for staff were improved. The physical condition of many homes needed urgent attention and the status of children's homes and their staff had to be raised. In response, the Government set up the

Despite all the expert attention, we appear to be no nearer to solving the problem

Support Force for Children's Residential Care, which was to last two years and offer advice to individual authorities on the relevant issues.

Yet despite all the expert attention these scandals have received, we appear to be no nearer to providing an effective solution to the problem. This amounts to a dereliction of duty to children in public care. Further scandals have surfaced in Northumbria, Islington, Cheshire and par-

ticularly North Wales. Private children's homes have also come under the spotlight, and last year one social services director complained about the Government's policy of deregulation, which allows private homes to operate with a minimum of outside supervision.

One of the children who suffered under the pin-down regime said that she was not frightened when she ran away from a particular residential home in Staffordshire because wherever she went could only be better than where she had come from. It would be foolhardy to think that abuse is not happening now in children's homes and that it will not occur in the future.

It is clear that there is a failure of leadership, both on a national and a local level. The Government in particular must provide a practical lead in dealing with a national problem requiring oversight, co-ordination and action. The findings and recommendations of numerous inquiries have gone largely unheeded.

The ethos of deregulation and the placing of responsibility locally will not do. The running down of the social services inspectorate, which has a vital role to play, is unacceptable. Recommendations repeatedly made over the years for an effective register of

individuals convicted of relevant offences must actually be heeded.

A general social services council is obviously essential in order to set and monitor standards for care workers. Improved training, better systems of supervision and inspection and the registration of homes are other vital matters.

Overall, children merit a specific individual who will work for change and for their protection. Other countries have either a minister for children, for example Ireland, or a children's rights commissioner, as in New Zealand and Sweden.

Only, for instance, if effective recruitment methods are in place will abusers be deterred from insinuating themselves into homes. A company set up recently offering skilled vetting procedures has gone out of business because its services were not taken up. If abuse does occur, there must be proper complaints procedures and effective action.

Residential care is recognised as an important resource for our society. But it must now be properly resourced, if it is to provide a safe haven for children. We owe nothing less than this to some of our most vulnerable citizens.

The writer chaired the Staffordshire "pin-down" inquiry in 1990-91.

Docklands needs marathon effort

ANOTHER VIEW

Stephen Molyneux

school hall had been blown apart.

All this will probably cost about £1m. Yet the Government has so far failed to say what financial help will be available. When I showed John Gummer, the Environment Secretary, around the damaged estate, he told me to apply to the little-known Bellwin Fund. Yet, to date, civil servants haven't decided whether we

are entitled to apply, and have failed to produce an application form.

The main problem would seem to be that applicants are expected to have taken out insurance against terrorist attacks. Yet this had become prohibitively expensive for Tower Hamlets, given its large number of properties and an increase in premiums that followed the earlier, unsuccessful attempt to blow up the Canary Wharf tower.

So, much as everyone on the Isle of Dogs enjoyed yesterday's race, local people kept asking me: "If they can do all this with the Marathon, why can't something be done to help us?"

When a tragedy like this occurs in America, the President declares a state of emergency. In Northern Ireland, the Government coughs up. Yet here in mainland Britain, local councils and voluntary groups are expected to pick up the pieces and grovel to civil servants, who behave as though they wish they were going away.

The Government must revise the entry criteria that is barring families and local authorities from immediate financial assistance. We need a properly co-ordinated national response to disasters like the Docklands bombing to be up and running before the next London marathon gets under way.

The writer is a Labour councillor for Millwall ward on the Isle of Dogs.

As yesterday's London Marathon wound its way down the newly reopened Marshwall road, runners and onlookers had a chance to see the effects of the Docklands blast 10 weeks ago. They must have been impressed by progress. The authorities have worked hard to make offices safe.

But what about the 550 families whose homes were devastated? From the route, which looped past the Barkantine estate, everything seemed fine, apart from a banner, draped from one tower block, proclaiming "Help the Barkantine". In reality, many victims still lack the support they need. Families that lost homes and possessions and sought grants have been turned down by the Department of Social Security. Those still living in Lantern

House, the most badly damaged block, have yet to learn whether the Government will provide any new money.

British Telecom has been unsympathetic. I wrote to Sir Iain Vallance, BT's chairman, about the company's decision to impose reconnection fees after the blast. His office replied: "His heart goes out to the local community". But it declined to waive the charges.

Tower Hamlets council has done its best. Staff collected three tons of broken glass and replaced more than a thousand windows and doors. Our teachers got the local primary and nursery school reopened three days after the

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LINGUAPHONE

obituaries / gazette

Sir Raymond Rickett

Raymond Rickett was driven by a vision of an educational system that would encourage people from all backgrounds and all walks of life to participate.

After a career which led from a lectureship in Chemistry at Liverpool College of Technology to vice-provostship of City of London Polytechnic, he became Director of Middlesex Polytechnic at its inception in 1972 and remained there until his retirement in 1991.

He was a great champion of the polytechnics (created in 1967 largely out of the old technical colleges), but believed strongly that the binary system of universities and polytechnics was divisive; he campaigned strongly for its end, which happened in 1992, when polytechnics were given university status.

Rickett had no tradition of family involvement in higher education; an ex-serviceman's grant took him after National Service in the Navy to Medway Technical College in 1953. It was there that at Illinois Institute of Technology, where he took his PhD in Physical Chemistry.

that he laid the foundations of his vision.

He then held positions at Plymouth College of Technology, West Ham College of Technology, Wolverhampton College of Technology, and Sir John Cass College, which became City of London Polytechnic. At Middlesex, in the face of some traditional academic reluctance, he successfully promoted the educational ideas he had developed. These included modular degrees and credit accumulation (being able to study several subjects in one degree for which credits are accumulated and which are transferable between comparable institutions), giving access to a wider range of the community (through part-time degrees etc) and founding links across international boundaries with joint European degrees.

From the beginning of his directorship Rickett played a large role in raising public awareness of the work going on in the polytechnics, through his many committees, and in advocating that polytechnics should be allowed to award their own degrees. This was achieved

in 1992: before that the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) awarded all polytechnic degrees.

Externally, Rickett made monumental efforts to gain recognition for the work of the new polytechnics as a whole and Middlesex in particular. He sat on all the major external committees: the Committee of Polytechnic Directors, of which he was twice chairman, the UK UNESCO Educational Advisory Committee, the Committee for International Co-operation in Higher Education, the UK Erasmus Student Grants Council, the British Council and the CNAA, of which he was chairman until his demise. Only gradually did the sounds of these battles filter through to the staff at Middlesex who were managing changes and fulfilling their continuing educational roles.

Internally, Rickett sowed the seeds of his ideas, encouraged staff to address them and develop means to implement them. His was not an insinuating style, but one of direct forceful challenge. We all as



Rickett: polytechnic champion

staff had to consider whether our ideas and ways were comfortably fixed because of habit or whether they were still valid part of the living dynamic of education.

Where Rickett saw innovation, excellence and care he publicly and privately acknowledged it. He took an acute interest in the work of the schools of study, and frequently surprised the staff of the Faculty of Art and Design by his spontaneous perception of quality – not always apparent in

the medley of degrees shows. He asked questions, such as what the future of education should be – even sending individual members of staff off for days to consider the subject – and eventually suggested answers. He relished debate, offended sometimes, inspired often. Whatever emotional response one had there was never any denying Rickett's massive grasp of his subject.

In the Seventies and Eighties, the fact that the level of work in polytechnics was largely equivalent to that in universities was not widely known, either abroad – as those of us commissioned to make contacts in foreign institutions discovered – or, more disturbingly, among a considerable percentage of British Members of Parliament, as a survey showed.

Rickett fought for equal funding for equal levels of work and early on declared his determination to get rid of the binary divide. This was a cause close to the heart of my father Lord Robbins, chairman of the Committee on Higher Education in 1961-63, whose report

was known as the Robbins Report. The creation of a binary system had gone radically against the majority recommendations of the committee, in which he was a fervent believer. He and Rickett realised the deleterious effect on the careers of young people of a system that encouraged ignorant, snobbish distinctions to be drawn without any meaningful differences existing. They discussed the problem and its implications on a number of occasions.

On retirement, Rickett saw the fruits of his endeavours in this sphere fulfilled. Middlesex Polytechnic became Middlesex University. Internally, its original constituent colleges of Hornsey, Enfield and Hendon (on many different sites) had grown and developed.

His interests spread beyond the institution and its work. He keenly followed the fortunes of Kent cricket, and loved to play himself. He played golf to a modest standard, but with a great degree of essential sportsmanship. His involvement with the Yehudi Menuhin Live Mu-

sic Now scheme was conducted with the same enthusiasm and concern that he devoted to all the activities he undertook.

When he retired from Middlesex he became Chairman of the newly formed Mid-Kent Health Care Trust. Here, in meetings and discussions, he set about making the connections he felt would best develop the involvement of all staff in the new situation and acknowledge their importance.

His wife, Naomi, and their three children acted as the firm base which is so necessary as a recreation from and springboard for such an active public involvement, and provided a space for the conception and growth of ideas which his huge active outside life thrived on. Their home, The Barn, in Mollish, Kent, bought relatively recently, was a marvellous theatre for a thought with its high space and centuries-old structure.

Raymond Rickett was unpretentious and unpretentious. He enjoyed the ordinary things in life – a trip to Whitstable where he had grown up, his boyhood haunts, his golf club, his

favourite sea-bathing spot. He was a warm, courteous person with a formidable presence and awesome energy, who devoted his life to helping people make the most of themselves.

The memory of his unquenchable, "indestructible" energy and involvement will remain with all who knew him. His heart was always the dominant force of his understanding.

Richard Robbins

Raymond Midway Wilson Rickett, educationist, born London 17 March 1927; Lecturer, Liverpool College of Technology 1960-62; Senior Lecturer/Principal Lecturer, West Ham College of Technology 1962-64; Head of Department, Wolverhampton College of Technology 1965-66; Vice-Principal, Sir John Cass College 1967-69; Vice-Provost, City of London Polytechnic 1969-72; Director, Middlesex Polytechnic 1972-91; CBE 1984; Ki 1990; Chairman, Mid-Kent Health Care Trust 1992-96; married 1958 Naomi Nishida (one son, two daughters); died London 6 April 1996.

Lucille Bremer

A red-headed beauty and distinguished dancer, Lucille Bremer partnered Fred Astaire in three of his finest routines, and for this reason will always be remembered fondly by lovers of the film musical, but her brief career in Hollywood is proof that stars are indeed born, not made. Bremer had the weight of the biggest studio in Hollywood behind her and was mistress to one of its most powerful producers but when she was not dancing her personality had a remote, aloof quality that did not endear her to audiences.

Born in Amsterdam, New York, she started dancing lessons when seven years old and at 12 danced with the Philadelphia Opera Company. She made her New York debut as a Rockette in the famed chorus line at Radio City Music Hall, then played in night-clubs and Broadway shows, including in the chorus of *Panama Hattie* (1940) and as replacement ingenue in *Lady in the Dark* (1941). She was appearing at the Versailles night-club when she was spotted by the producer Arthur Freed. "The moment I saw her," said Freed later, "I realised she had the elegance of Marilyn Miller. I took her to MGM and she did a scene from *Dark Victory* for her test. After seeing only a minute and a half of it, Louis B. Mayer, head of the studio, said, 'She's going to be very, very big.'"

Bremer was first given extensive training by the studio's dramatic coach, Lillian Burns, then cast in the prime role of

Judy Garland's older sister in *Meet Me in St Louis* (1944). As the prim, socially conscious Rose, whose hope for a long-distance proposal by telephone forms the basis of the film's first episode, Bremer was a perfect foil for Garland, admonishing her for being too forward with boys lest the bloom wear off, to which Garland drily replies, "Personally, I think I have too much bloom."

Bremer then partnered Astaire in *Ziegfeld Follies* (started in 1944 but released in 1946), performing with him two magnificent numbers which are today as moving and exhilarating as ever. Both are stories in dance, an extension of the Astaire, had pioneered with Ginger Rogers when they performed "Let's Face the Music and Dance" in *Follow the Fleet*. In the first, Astaire is a gentleman thief who crashes a society party only to fall in love with his victim. After singing to her on a starlit terrace, he takes her in his arms and they glide into a languorous *pas de deux* as the sweeping strains of the gorgeous "This Heart of Mine" (by Harry Warren and Arthur Freed), twirling effortlessly as the floor revolves beneath them.

The second number, built around Douglas Furber and Philip Braham's "Limehouse Blues", is a 13-minute *tour de force*, its centrepiece a Chinese fantasy dreamed by a young man as he lies dying, the innocent victim of a shooting in Limehouse, east London. In an exotic set of orange, red and yellow

low (conceived by Irene Sharaff), Astaire and Bremer perform an intricate dance involving syncopated leaps, twirls and precise manipulation of fans which open, close and criss-cross as the couple execute Robert Alton's stunning choreography. This dance – one of the film musical's crowning glories – demonstrated Bremer's skill, precision and athleticism.

MGM then decided to star her alongside Astaire in Vincente Minnelli's *Yolanda and the Thief* (1945), but its slight, whimsical story of a confidence trickster who pretends to be the guardian angel of an ingenious heiress needed more charm and wit than either Bremer or the script were able to provide, and its score (by Warren and Freed) was weak.

A Dali-influenced Surreal ballet was imaginative, though perceived by many as pretentious, but the one good song, "Coffee Time", a surging jazz riff, inspired the third of the great Astaire-Bremer duets.

Set in a South American plaza, its floor patterned in undulating black and white, the number starts with carnival crowds dancing gaily and clapping hands to the insistent rhythms, who gradually part to leave the way clear for the star pair, who clap, kick, twirl and embrace with escalating *elan* in variations of jive. It is a totally joyous sequence in the otherwise tepid film, which proved a box-office disaster.

Bremer was one of 13 stars top-billed in the Jerome Kern biography *Till the Clouds Roll By* (1946), playing the fictitious role of a spoiled girl (daughter of Kern's best friend) who expects a short cut to fame. Bremer's exuberant dance duet with Van Johnson, "I Won't Dance", was a highlight of the film, but she was unable to counteract her role's basic lack of sympathy. Both Freed and Mayer had now lost interest in her, and after a role in one of the studio's "Dr Gillespie" films, *Dark Delusions* (1947), as a young girl given to bouts of insanity, she was dropped.

Years later, Judy Garland was asked what happened to Bremer. "The studio let her go," she replied, then after a pause added, "...and no one cared." In fact Bremer made three more films, including Edgar G. Ulmer's *Ruthless* (1948), an impressive account of the rise and fall of a scoundrel (Zachary Scott) in which Bremer, wife of Sidney Greenstreet but lusting for Scott, made telling use of her resemblance to Bette Davis, indicating that she might have been able to carve a career as second-lead villainess. She preferred to retire completely from the screen, marrying the son of a former president of Mexico and eventually settling in California, where she raised five daughters and ran a shop selling children's clothes.

Tom Vallance

Lucille Bremer, actress, dancer, born Amsterdam, New York 21 February 1923; married (five daughters); died 16 April 1996.



'She's going to be very, very big': Bremer in 1944

Piet Hein

Piet Hein did not exactly have an ordinary Danish name – his forebears on his father's side were in fact Dutch – and nor could it be said of him that he was exactly an ordinary Dane: he is talked of as a poet and inventor, something of a philosopher, something of an artist – a pupil of the Swedish cartoonist Albert Engström on the one hand and of the Danish atomic physicist Niels Bohr on the other.

The paradox inherent in this lies perhaps at the heart of his most famous creations, the brief aphoristic poems known in English as *Grooks* and the so-called "super ellipse" in which Hein combined the ellipse and the oval. Danish he certainly was, but he combined his Danishness with a cosmopolitan outlook, reflected in the many years he spent abroad, some six or seven of them in Britain.

Piet Hein was born in 1905 into an affluent middle-class family. His father, Hjalmar Hein, was a civil engineer, his mother, Estrid, an eye specialist. In the small world of Danish intellectual and cultural life it is perhaps no surprise to discover that his mother was a cousin of Karen Blixen's mother. After attending the famous Metropolitanskole, where mathematics was his principal subject, Piet Hein went to study art at the Stockholm Royal Swedish School of Fine Arts, breaking off and returning to Copenhagen three years later in order to study philosophy and theoretical physics, though once more without taking a final examination.

He then embarked on a series of experiments and inventions in fields ranging from light to Oriental games, and from creations in metalwork, china and glass, including a sophisticated lock mechanism. To the super ellipse that was used in the design of tables and chairs, and which ultimately came to form the basis for the new Sergels Square in Stockholm in the 1960s, when Hein was employed there as a town planning consultant. He – and his ideas – were widely discussed in scientific journals.

It was, however, for his poems that he became best known. His *Grooks*, written under the pseudonym Kumbel Kumbell (an erudite and complicated pun on his own name), began to appear in the newspaper *Politiken* in 1940 soon after the beginning of the German occupation, and before long they achieved a national following. Witty, aphoristic.

subtle, sometimes humorous, sometimes biting, they could be used in typical Danish resistance fashion to comment on the occupation, but they went further than this in their general comments on life, their play on words, their fondness for the stinging in the tail, their sheer inventiveness.

Consequently, they continued to be written long after the occupation and became one of the best known and best loved of all Danish literary products for many years, certainly until the rather more drab literary creed of the 1970s took over. Piet Hein is said to have written some 10,000 in all, and some of them have achieved proverbial status. Many of them, each illustrated by Hein himself, were collected and published in book form, and there are six volumes of English translations, also splendidly done by the author.

In an earlier day, such poems would inevitably have been didactic moralisings, but Piet Hein avoided all such in his search for humanity and tolerance. The best advice he could give, he said, was not to give advice. If he modelled himself on anyone, it must surely have been the late 18th-century humorist Johan Herman Wessel, and, significantly enough, Hein wrote the prologue for a Royal Theatre production celebrating Wessel in 1932. The literary ancestry was a good one: Wessel is still read today.

As a result both of his scientific work and his commitment to the liberal ideas envisaged in movements such as the World Movement for World Federal Government, Open Door International and the PEN Club, to name but a few, Piet Hein wrote a series of theoretical and philosophical works. He received a host of distinctions and awards, including honorary doctorates in Yale and Odense. It is, however, as the creator of the super ellipse and the *Grooks* that he is most likely to be remembered by a general public that approved both of his ideas and his manner of expressing them.

Perhaps the best summary of these is the *Grook* he wrote and placed in the middle of a drawing of the super ellipse:

There is one art,
no more, no less:
to do all things
with artlessness.

W. Glyn Jones

Piet Hein, inventor and poet, born Copenhagen 16 December 1905; died Middelfart 17 April 1996.

Christopher Johnson

Christopher Johnson, editor and musician, died on Easter Day. He came from Rushmere St Andrew near Ipswich. He never lost his marked accent and his slow speech pattern belied the quickness of his mind.

He graduated from Sussex University in 1966, with a degree in English. He is still remembered there as a brilliantly unconventional student and as guitarist with the university rock group. Even then, he was something of a polymath. He wrote poetry, prose, letters, journals. He drew. He wrote songs – mostly tunes with complicated three-part guitar accompaniments – and played music endlessly. He combined extreme personal and artistic fastidiousness with a dedicated Bohemian life style.

Johnson's working life was also Bohemian sometimes and bewilderingly conventional at others. He worked as a session guitarist in London in the late 1960s and as a busker in Paris in the mid-1970s. Early on he worked as a lift-operator at Liberty, in Regent Street, London, but later held down long-term jobs with the DHSS and with a housing trust.

It was only in middle age, working for Skoob Books, an independent London publishing house concentrating on occult

and literary texts, that the two sides of Johnson's nature came together successfully. As a bookshop manager (at Skoob's shop off Southampton Row), occult book expert and editor, first of reprints and then of new books, he showed authority, precision and passion. He was particularly committed to the development of a literary list representing the power of imagination and the visionary moment. He kept in print the writing of the poets Kathleen Raine, David Gascoyne and Michael Hamburger, while he promoted the new work of Jeremy Reed and Peter Abbs.

The occult had been one of his lasting interests. At one point, in the early Seventies, he

was heavily involved with the Druids. All forms of religion and magic seemed to fascinate him as strategies for developing the inner life and keeping back the reign of pragmatism.

At the end of his life, overworked and ill, he left Skoob and returned to the Anglican Church, where he had friends and for which he had been writing organ music. Last Christmas, just before his illness was diagnosed as cancer, he wrote and taped 12 songs which the session guitarist Mo Foster described as "a cross between Jacques Brel and Ray Davies". It was an extension of his guitar work in the Sixties.

It was a puzzle to his friends that Johnson, the gentlest of men and notably constant in his friendships, should have such a turbulent private life. He never really settled down. At the end he was living alone in a small book-filled flat in Bloomsbury. He is mourned by a wide circle of friends, many of whom – given that Chris Johnson always compartmentalised a complicated life – are just now starting to know of each other.

Glyn Jones

Christopher Reginald Johnson, editor and musician; born Ipswich 13 June 1944; died London 7 April 1996.



Johnson: precision and passion

Arnold Neustadter

Arnold Neustadter was the inventor of the Rolodex and devoted most of his life to the quest for order in the office and home. His invention, a cylindrical rotating card file, was designed in 1950 as a tool to speed the work of the secretary and later became the Establishment's wheel of power and a lasting totem to the art of social and business mobility.

A collector of antique paperweights who married his secretary, Neustadter was not the greatest user of his machine: he didn't care to use the telephone and always came to the point. Fittingly, he kept a clean desk.

He was "the most organised man I ever knew," his son-in-law David Revasch said. "His life was so organised it was like his own invention. Whenever anyone put something on his desk that didn't belong there, he'd move it. He could have patented his own life."

Neustadter was born in Brooklyn in 1911 and attended New York University before joining his father's box-manufacturing business in 1931. He soon struck out on his own and established his company Zephyr American Corporation with a series of moderately successful inventions.

The first was the Autodex, a

spring-mounted personal phone directory that popped up at a given letter of the alphabet. Then came the Swivodex, a spill-proof inkwell, and the Clipodex, which could be clipped to the knee to help secretaries and stenographers to take dictation.

In 1950 he launched the Rolodex. At first it received a lukewarm reception. "I knew I had a good idea, but people were sceptical at first," he said in 1988, "and we had trouble getting stationary stores to buy it."

Neustadter toured sales stores and office supply stores with a promotional gambit to entice orders for the \$7.95 machine – he would offer \$50 to anyone who could locate a card faster than one of his company reps.

The machine quickly became a staple in offices throughout the country, capturing 90 per cent of the market and transcending its original clerical purpose to become a symbol of success for businessmen, politicians and socialites who came to be described in terms of their bulging Rolodexes.

"Hollywood put it in films and television, then everyone believed the bigger the Rolodex, the bigger the man," said Revasch.

Neustadter's invention has survived social and technological change. Designed for the hierarchical Fifties, it proved an essential tool in the Eighties era of networking and in this decade the computer has dented but not destroyed its usefulness. In recent years the number of different models has declined and some have become computerised. The largest in the range, the 6,000-card, three-wheel Torque-A-Matic, has been discontinued altogether.

He ran Zephyr American until 1970, when he sold the company at a vast profit. He retained the European rights to Rolodex and spent seven years in London managing the business before retiring to Palm Beach, Florida, where his interests turned to philanthropy and art. He amassed a collection of modern work that included Chagall, Picasso and Henry Moore and he supported Israeli and Jewish causes, making contributions to the Jewish Anti-Defamation League and the Israel Museum.

Edward Helmore

Arnold Neustadter, businessman and inventor; born Brooklyn 1911; married (one son, two daughters); died New York 17 April 1996.

BIRTHS

CURRIE: On 3 April 1996, to Harriet and Andrew, a daughter, Daisy Lulu Aramis, sister to Amber Lulu. With thanks to maternity staff at St John and St Elizabeth.

DEATHS

CUSHING: Professor George Frederick, 81, St Christopher's Hospice on 12 April 1996, aged 75. Emeritus Professor of Hungarian, London University. Service of Thanksgiving at the Methodist Church, Prince Imperial Road, Chislehurst, on Thursday 25 April, at 3.15pm. Family flowers only, but donations, if desired, to St Christopher's Hospice, Sydenham, or Chislehurst Methodist Church.

PAINE: Robert, Architect. Died quietly at Forthwich, on 18 April 1996. Cremation on 25 April, at one o'clock, at Barham Crematorium.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

Announcements for GAZETTE BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Marriages, Deaths, Memorials) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2811 or faxed to 0171-293 3010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

Birthdays

Mr Leo Abse, former MP 79; Mr Eddie Albert, actor, 88; Sir Michael Atiyah, mathematician, 67; Sir Christopher Ball, linguist, and former Warde, Keeble College, Oxford, 61; Mr Lewis Biggs, Curator, Tate Gallery, Liverpool, 44; Mr Alan Bond, yachtsman and businessman, 58; Mr Peter Bowring, former chairman, C.T. Bowring, 73; Mr Glen Campbell, country singer 88; Mr Alan Dukes, former leader of the Fine Gael party in Ireland, 81; Dr Eric Fenby, former Professor of Harcourt, Royal Academy of Music, 90; Mr Peter Frampton, rock musi-

cian, 46; Sir William Gage, High Court judge, 58; Mr Lloyd Houghton, boxer, 30; Mr Robin Hurton, merchant banker, 63; Mr Ronald Hynd, choreographer, 65; Mr Robert Key MP 51; Mr Archy Kirkwood MP, 50; Mr Nico Ladenis, restaurateur, 62; Dr Geoffrey Marshall, Provost, Queen's College, Oxford, 67; Lord Menzies, violinist, 80; Mr Jack Nicholson, actor, 59; The Earl of Oxford and Asquith, former Governor of the Seychelles, 80; Miss Margaret Pereira, forensic scientist, 68; Sir Edward Ratford, former ambassador to Norway, 62; Mr R.J. Ritchie, former tennis player, 86; Professor Sir Eric Scowen, physician, 86; Mr Charles Sison, author and poet, 82; Mr David Summerlake, Head Master, Westminster School, 59; Sir Robert Wade-Gery, executive director and vice-chairman, BZW, 67.

Anniversaries

Births: Isabella, Queen of Castile and Leon, 1451; Giuseppe Torelli, composer, 1658; Henry Fielding, novelist, 1707; Immanuel Kant, philosopher, 1724; James Graham, poet, 1765; Madame de Staël (Anne-Louise Germaine Necker, Baronne de Staël-Holstein), writer, 1766; José de Madrazo y Kuntz, painter, 1781; Wilfred Ellington Bendall, composer, 1850; Phil (Philip William) May, caricaturist, 1864; Lenin (Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov), Communist leader, (Old Style 10 April) 1870; Ellen Anderson Ghoslon Glasgow, novelist, 1874; Sergei Sergeyevich Prokofiev, composer, 1891; Kathleen Mary Ferrier, contralto, 1912; Julius Robert Oppenheimer, physicist, 1904; Sir Sidney Nolan, painter, 1917. Deaths: John Tradescant, gardener, 1662;

James Hargreaves, inventor of the spinning jenny, 1778; Thomas Rowlandson, cartoonist, 1827; Richard Trevithick, steam engineer, 1833; Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, statesman, 1908; John Passmore Edwards, newspaper proprietor and philanthropist, 1911; Frederick Henry Rye, motor-car pioneer, 1933; Basil Dean, actor, manager and playwright, 1978; Aysel Easton Adams, photographer, 1984; Richard Millhouse Nixon, 37th US president, 1994. On this day: Pedro Alvarez de Cabral reached Brazil and claimed it for Portugal, 1500; the Royal Society was incorporated, 1662; Napoleon defeated the Piedmontese at the Battle of Mondovì, 1796; the Baltic Exchange, London, was founded (as the Baltic Club), 1823; St Helena became a Crown Colony, 1834; the packet ship *Stratus* crossed the At-

lantic for the first time under continuous steam power, the voyage taking 18 days, 10 hours, 1838; the second Battle of Ypres began, when poison gas was used for the first time by Germany, 1915; the New York World's Fair opened, 1964; the army in Greece effected a coup, and martial law was declared, 1967; Robin Knox-Johnston sailed into Falmouth after a 312-day non-stop voyage, 1969. Today is the Feast Day of Agrippa I, pope, Saints Epiphanius and Alexander, St Leonides of Alexandria, St Opportuna and St Theodore of Sykeon.

Lectures

National Gallery: Franca Trinchieri Camiz, "Caravaggio and Music", 1pm.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh attend a Reception and Dinner at Syon House, Brentford, Middlesex, given by HM Lord-Lieutenants to mark the Queen's 70th birthday and the Duke of Edinburgh's 75th birthday. The Duke of Edinburgh visits Cheam Hawtrey School, Newbury, Berkshire. The Duke of Gloucester, Patron, Japan Society, attends the Annual Dinner at the Grosvenor House Hotel, London W1.

Changing of the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am; 1st Battalion Welsh Guards mounts the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Scots Guards.

0171 293 2811

Dilly-dallying Footsie gets off the fence and chases Wall Street

After limping along for more than two months blue chips have suddenly displayed the type of enthusiasm that sent New York rocketing to new highs.

The gap which opened between the FT-SE 100 index and the Dow Jones Average mystified many stock market players. For a time the Dow seemed capable of producing record-breaking performances with infinite ease while Footsie, until last week, dilly-dallied.

But perhaps too much attention is paid to Footsie; after all, the supporting index, which covers the 250 shares that come after the 100 blue chips, has been hitting new peaks with monotonous regularity.

It could be argued that supporting shares are less worried by political uncertainty and experienced the so-called feel-good factor before their more illustrious colleagues. Are they, then, with their broad spread of interests, a far better reflection of the stock market

than blue chips? Even if there is no likelihood of Footsie, with its huge capitalisation, being replaced by the second-liners index.

Observers will continue to use it to plot the market although there must be a strong case for more attention being paid to the little used FT-SE 350 index, embracing the two main indices. It stretched to new highs before Footsie's belated response last week.

A week, as Harold Wilson so famously pointed out, is a long time in politics - it is also a long time in many other areas, including the market.

A week ago, although the bulls were gathering, there seemed little to suggest blue chips would pick up and suddenly stride to new highs.

Although the political outlook remained hazy, encouraging economic data and a rush of takeover speculation drove shares forward.

The astonishing descent on

National Power, which had not been seen as a takeover play, was the big influence: the shares of Britain's largest generator jumped by 100p to 592p over the week with one investor prepared to pay 620p.

The arrival of Southern Co, the US predator, underlined the feeling that a rush of corporate action was due before the market got around to worrying about the election and what the Labour Party's real attitude would be towards the City and the bid industry.

The Conservatives' dismal showing in the Staffordshire South by-election must, the market reasoned, sharpen the desire of any predator to get a deal done and dusted before any chance of New, or even old, Labour interference.

The past week has strengthened the bull's claim that Footsie at 4,000 points is not far away. A few takeover bids - Ladbrokes, Lucas Industries, London Electric and Thom



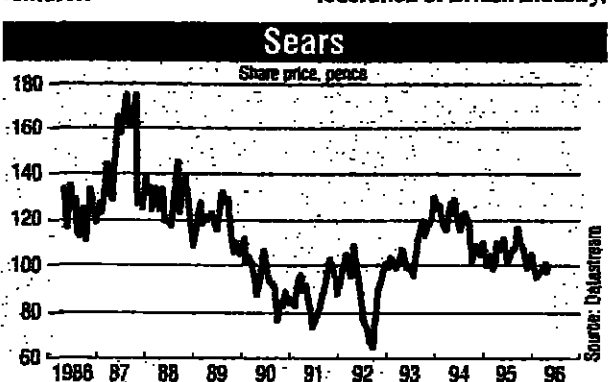
STOCK MARKET WEEK

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year

EMI? - would provide further inspiration; so would firm developments in the NP/Southern and BT/Cable & Wireless adventures.

Retail sales for March will be assiduously studied. It is hoped they will confirm the upward trend signalled by the Confederation of British Industry,



which gave retail shares such an uplift last week. NatWest Securities is looking for a repeat of February's 0.6 per cent increase. The CBI's industrial trends survey and the response to the Government's £3bn gilts auction will also be important indicators this week.

With the emphasis on retailing for the second week running, it is appropriate that Sears, the conglomerate created by the legendary Sir Charles Clore and taken apart by his successors, should feature in the results parade.

Sears is one share missing the market party. Before the 1987 crash it touched 175p. It is now below 100p and last week an institution was prepared to dump shares at 94p. Pressure is mounting on Ulsterman Liam Strong, the chief executive drafted in from British Airways, to deliver the goods. He has undertaken a stream of disposals which can only distort the year's figures.

due tomorrow. Normalised profit could be around £103m, down from £139.6m but the headline pre-tax return could be nearer £65m.

Austin Reed is another retailer on the rack. Profits are expected to have nearly halved to not much above £3m, a development that will not strengthen the clothing chain's defence should one of the rumoured predators - Burton and Moss Bros are the favourites - decide the time is ripe to strike.

Bentalls, the Kingston-upon-Thames department store, and the Etam fashion chain are other retailers likely to record profit falls but Essex Furniture, DFS Furniture and JJB Sports are expected to have made headway.

Eurotunnel, with year's results today, will no doubt have another disastrous tale to tell. A loss of £700m and more pressure from its bankers is expected. But Associated British Foods, announcing interim fig-

ures today, is expected to produce a further example of its steady growth, with £181m against £165m. The group is cash-rich and could be tempted into a share buy-back or even a special dividend.

The view is it will not raid its cash hoard to mount a big bid, but remain content with modest, bolt-on acquisitions.

Bank of Scotland, due to report on Wednesday, is another on the market's ever-lengthening hit list. But the shares have fallen from grace as any takeover has failed to materialise and the group, despite an expected 22 per cent profit increase to £550m, has found trading tough.

The week's results are rounded off by Joseph Holt, a family-run Manchester brewer. A cost-conscious company with some of the cheapest beer prices in the country, Holt's shares are standing at an expectedly rich £34.25p each, giving a £105m capitalisation.

Alcoholic Beverages				Distributors			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Adn Dornier	10.50	+	100	Adn Dornier	10.50	+	100
Brewery	10.50	+	100	Brewery	10.50	+	100
...
Banks, Merchant				Engineering Vehicles			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Banks, Retail				Extractive Industries			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Breweries, Pubs & Rest				Food Manufacturers			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Building/Construction				Gas Distribution			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Building Materials				Health Care			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Chemicals				Household Goods			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Electronics				Investment Companies			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Engineering				Leisure & Hotels			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Food Manufacturers				Life Assurance			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Gas Distribution				Media			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Health Care				Oil Exploration			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Household Goods				Oil, Integrated			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Investment Companies				Other Financial			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Leisure & Hotels				Pharmaceuticals			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Life Assurance				Printing & Paper			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Media				Property			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Oil Exploration				Retailers, Food			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Oil, Integrated				Retailers, General			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Other Financial				Support Services			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
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Pharmaceuticals				Telecommunications			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
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Printing & Paper				Textiles & Apparel			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
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Property				Transport			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
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Retailers, Food				Water			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
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Retailers, General				Index-linked			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
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Support Services				Shorts			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
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Telecommunications				Mediums			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Textiles & Apparel				Longs			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
...
Transport				Undated			
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
Barclays	10.50	+	100	Barclays	10.50	+	100
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Water							
Stock	Price	Chg	Vol				
Barclays	10.50	+	100				
...				

THE INDEPENDENT

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Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.

Other details: x Ex rights x Ex-dividend x Ex all u United Securities Market a Suspended p Party Paid pm Nil Paid Shares

Source: Firstcall

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Interest Rates

	UK	Germany	US	Japan
Bank	6.00%	5.00%	5.25%	5.00%
Prime	6.00%	5.00%	5.25%	5.00%
Discount	5.00%	4.50%	4.75%	4.50%
10-Day Repo	5.00%	4.50%	4.75%	4.50%
3-Month Repo	5.00%	4.50%	4.75%	4.50%
6-Month Repo	5.00%	4.50%	4.75%	4.50%
12-Month Repo	5.00%	4.50%	4.75%	4.50%

Oil Exploration

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
BP	10.50	+	100
...

Oil, Integrated

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
BP	10.50	+	100
...

Other Financial

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
BP	10.50	+	100
...

Pharmaceuticals

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
BP	10.50	+	1

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THE INDEPENDENT • Monday 22 April 1996

BUSINESS NEWS DESK: tel 0171-293 2530 fax 0171-293 2098

National Power set to raise Southern bid

MICHAEL HARRISON

National Power is today expected to renew its bid for Southern Electric with an offer of around £9.90 a share, valuing the company at just under £3.6bn.

The renewed bid is designed to fend off a threatened £8bn takeover of National Power by Southern Company, the giant American utility.

National Power's offer will be

conditional on the deal being waved through by Trade and Industry Secretary Ian Lang.

In an attempt to rush the offer through, National Power may dispense with the conventional 60-day bid timetable in favour of a 21-day bid.

Southern Company of Atlanta, Georgia, was meanwhile reviewing its options yesterday as it became clear that National Power was intent on pursuing an independent strategy

and rebuffing the American merger approach. Some observers believe the US utility might abandon its planned takeover and switch its attention elsewhere in the UK or Europe.

One source said: "If National Power is intent on pursuing an expensive short-term defence of itself, Southern will opt for another target, perhaps in another part of the world."

"There is a distinct possibility that Southern will not bid and it is getting more probable with every move National Power makes."

The Government is expected to announce later this week whether it will allow the National Power-Southern Electric merger to proceed.

The takeover has already been approved with only minimal conditions by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Ministers may, however, decide

to impose tougher conditions on the merger to protect competition and prevent National Power abusing its dominant position in the electricity pool, the wholesale market for England and Wales.

National Power's initial bid last October was worth £10.10 a share and valued Southern Electric at £2.8bn but since then it has demerged its stake in the National Grid. Its fresh bid of around £9.90 compares

with last Friday's closing price of £8.59.

National Power is likely to justify the healthy premium on the grounds that its price will include the final dividend Southern Electric is paying. Since last October Southern Electric has also benefited from the £600m sale of First Hydro to Mission Energy of the US.

National Power's manoeuvres since Southern Company made its merger approach last

Tuesday are said to have been viewed as "extremely depressing" in the American camp.

In addition to its renewed bid, National Power announced the £1.7bn sale last Friday of 4,000 megawatts of power station capacity to the Hanson-owned Eastern Electricity.

Some sources suggest this has made the prospect of Southern Company going ahead with a hostile bid remote. Others believe that the Amer-

icans are simply trying to dampen expectations and hence lower the price at which they will bid.

Tom Boren, chief executive of Southern Electric International, Southern Company's overseas division, left Britain last Friday for Europe and was flying on to America.

If Southern did pull out, it could turn its attention to a deal with PowerGen, or build its own power stations in Britain.

Tax juggling gave Glaxo £132m boost

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Glaxo Wellcome yesterday rejected any suggestion that it had not provided fully for huge potential tax liabilities following revelations that up to half the drugs group's recent earnings growth may have come from international tax juggling.

Accounts filed recently by Glaxo's manufacturing operation in Singapore show that tax provisions released over the past two and a half years to December have boosted group profits by £132m.

In the two years to June 1995, which cover most of this period, Glaxo's after-tax profits - excluding last year's Wellcome acquisition - grew by £255m. This suggests that approaching half the growth in group profits may have been derived from the clever use of tax allowances rather than from the underlying business.

Glaxo yesterday refused to comment on the effect of tax on its recent earnings, although sources confirmed the accuracy of the figures. However, a spokesman for the group reiterated that all past tax liabilities had been fully provided for.

The Singapore operation was set up 10 years ago and the benefit derived from it in the terms of taxation and profitability has been adequately disclosed and widely known. It has been disclosed in annual reports for many years.

Glaxo's flagging underlying growth revealed by the figures helps explain why the group was so anxious to seal last year's £9.3bn takeover of rival drugs group Wellcome.

The addition of Wellcome is expected to boost future earnings but it now also transpires that, separately, the Singapore businesses were a key element in financing the deal.

Documents show that £2bn, equivalent to a third of the cash element of the total consideration for Wellcome, was trans-

mitted to the UK from Singapore three months after the takeover.

It is also thought the Singapore operation helped reinforce disastrous treasury operations in Bermuda, where losses on an ill-judged bond portfolio eventually reached £115m.

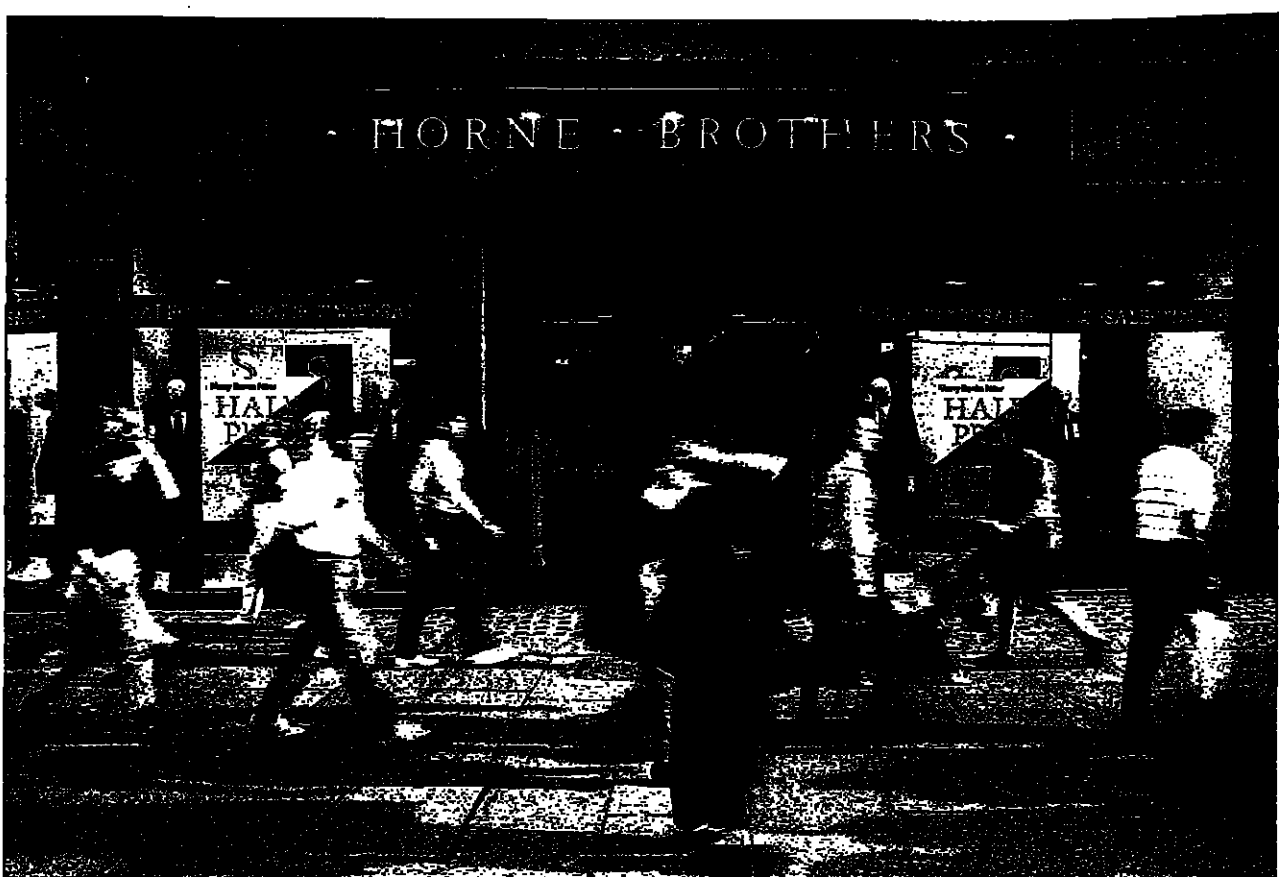
The huge gains available to the group in minimising tax also shed light on the drug giant's long-running battle to prevent the Inland Revenue re-opening old tax accounts filed before 1986 to investigate the legitimacy of so-called "transfer pricing" arrangements between international subsidiaries.

Glaxo last year lost a High Court case against the Inland Revenue involving transfer pricing and its appeal to the Court of Appeal was thrown out at the end of 1995. It is now involved in discussions with the tax authorities to see if the matter can be settled out of court, but no early resolution is expected.

The dispute involves early tax years in the 1980s when Glaxo was growing rapidly on the back of Zantac, its best-selling anti-ulcer drug, and is thought to involve the Singapore business. The operation, which makes Zantac, is taxed at a lower rate than typical elsewhere in the world. Last year the original Glaxo had a tax rate of 29.5 per cent against 37 per cent at the new Wellcome operations.

Notes in Glaxo's accounts have for some years drawn attention to the continuing dispute with the tax authorities.

But the revelation that money was transferred from Singapore sits oddly with a statement by Glaxo last year that no provision beyond that made in the accounts had been made for "taxation which would arise on the distribution of profits retained by overseas subsidiary and associated undertakings on the grounds the profits are retained for use in the business".



Confidence regained: Credit card use at high street retailers was particularly strong over the last year

Surge in lending and spending

DIANE COYLE
Economics Editor

Fresh signs that consumer confidence is picking up are expected this week from figures on March mortgage lending due today and retail sales on Thursday.

Following last week's run of good news, which gave the Government hope that the economic tide will turn in its favour in good time for the general election, further buoyancy could help shares in London set fresh records.

"Perky figures this week will help keep the FT-SE going up," said Bob Semple, UK equity strategist at NatWest Markets. Building societies and big banks are expected today to report an increase in mortgage loans following other signs of life in the housing market. House prices have started to climb, and estate agents have reported a noticeable increase in numbers of customers.

New figures released this morning show a further surge in spending on debit and credit cards last month. Spending on plastic grew 23.4 per cent in the year to March, when it topped £6bn for the first month.

Debit card spending expanded by a third during the year to March. Credit card spending grew 16.8 per cent, the highest since last July, according to the Credit Card Re-

search Group. Elizabeth Phillips, director of the group, said: "Although the increase was probably inflated by pre-Easter shopping, it seems clear that consumers are regaining their confidence."

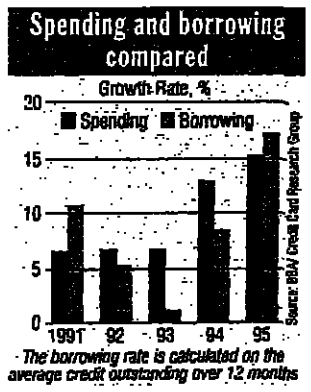
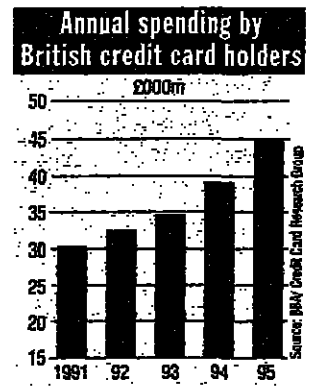
Use of plastic cards at high street retailers was particularly strong, growing 27 per cent in the 12 months to March, with growth spread evenly among different types of store.

The recent surge follows a 19 per cent rise in the amount spent using debit and credit cards in 1995, or 15 per cent on credit cards and 26 per cent on debit cards. Debit cards are expected to overtake credit cards by the year 2000 if they keep up the current pace of growth.

Credit card borrowing has grown significantly faster than spending. It was up 17 per cent, compared with 8 per cent growth in 1994. It was the first time since 1991 - before the recession - that card holders increased their borrowing faster than their spending.

Lloyd's Bank economists predict in a report today that consumer spending will grow faster this year than at any time since the 1989 boom.

The Labour Party attempted to burst the bubble by focusing on new figures from Dun & Bradstreet showing an increase in business failures of 15 per cent in the year to the first quarter of 1996.



BT likes the sound of Chinese telephone numbers

Peking's *China Daily* newspaper has just published a slew of figures which give some idea why BT is so keen to merge with Cable & Wireless to secure a foothold in the Chinese telecommunications market. It should be noted that Chinese numbers always tend to dazzle, even if they sometimes look better on paper than in reality.

So, with this caveat, here is a sample of what China's posts and telecommunications ministry has in mind for the next few years: 79 million new telephone lines are to be installed by 2000.

China plans to have the world's largest telephone network by the end of the decade with 420 million lines. Even then the network will cover only 10.5 per cent of the country.

Meanwhile the Chinese are

enthusiastically plugging into mobile communications, with 2.06 million subscribers signing up last year, bringing the total of users up to 3.64 million and a target of 14-18 million users by 2000.

The growth in pager ownership is even more fantastic. There were a mere 430,000 pager users in 1990. Last year 25 million were at the beck and call of these tiny beeping machines with 50 million expected to be signed up by the end of the decade.

BT is running corporate image-building advertisements in East Asian newspapers at the moment. This is no coincidence.

It had to happen. Not only has Hong Kong's office price bubble burst but developers are holding back on acquiring new office sites and are show-

VIEW FROM HONG KONG

ing reluctance in developing those they already have in hand. According to property consultants Vigers the capital value of offices in the prime central district has fallen from a high of HK\$15,500 (£1,536) per square foot in the second quarter of 1994 to HK\$8,400 at the end of last year.

Meanwhile, office rentals, still in the outer stratosphere, dropped by over a quarter last year to a monthly rental of around HK\$66 per square foot.

These price falls push Hong Kong off its uncomfortable perch of having the world's highest prices for office space. The dreaded word "glut" is

creeping into the vocabulary of estate agents as they contemplate the short-term future with up to 12 million square feet of grade A office space coming on to the market in the next couple of years at a time new supply is running at about double demand.

Companies are simply refusing to pay the kind of prices demanded in the central district and are moving out to fringe areas or, in the case of regional operations, quitting the colony altogether.

Many of the big firms are heading in the direction of Singapore, which is steadily building its own office price bubble.

making it increasingly less competitive.

Stockbrokers' analysts - who are always most happy when moving as a herd - seem to have decided that Hong Kong's newspaper price war is over after an exchange of hostilities lasting about six months, which has left a trail of casualties, including half-a-dozen publications that gave up the fight and folded.

Listed newspapers were given a hammering at the end of last year after the price war was launched by the Oriental Press Group, striving Murdoch-style to retain its market leadership.

Its flagship *Oriental Daily* newspaper was under threat from the brash new *Apple Daily*, which zoomed from nowhere to the number two position in the readership stakes after its launch last summer.

As Oriental Press Group cut the prices of its publications to below the costs of production, investors took fright. However, cover prices are inching up again and good news about falling newspaper costs have led the analysts' herd to conclude that media stocks are a buy. OPG is now among the year's best share performers.

The herd seems to have overlooked the simple fact that the reason for the price war has not gone away as *Apple* and its sister publications continue to make headway.

Meanwhile a new paper, called *Mad Dog Daily*, was launched as the price war started to peter out. The title says a lot about the state of the newspaper market in Hong Kong these days.

STEPHEN VINES

STOCK MARKETS									
FT-SE 100									
	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Index	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000
Indices									
FTSE 100	3957.10	+90.3	+2.4	3957.10	3639.50	3.85			
FTSE 250	4534.50	+126.5	+2.9	4534.50	4015.30	3.28			
FTSE 350	1946.40	+47.5	+2.5	1946.40	1816.60	3.72			
FT Small Cap	2187.97	+64.0	+3.0	2187.97	1954.06	2.96			
FT All Share	1924.17	+47.7	+2.5	1924.17	1791.95	3.67			
New York	5535.48	+2.9	+0.1	5535.48	3832.09	2.17			
Tokyo	21893.84	+223.4	+1.0	21893.84	19724.70	0.72			
Hong Kong	10818.49	-31.3	-0.3	11584.99	10079.39	3.51			
Frankfurt	2536.92	+24.7	+1.0	2536.92	2263.86	1.84			

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES									
UK interest rates									
	1M	3M	6M	1Y	2Y	3Y	5Y	10Y	30Y
Bank of England	5.94	6.38	6.02	6.35	8.11	8.35			
US interest rates	5.38	5.75	6.55	7.01	8.80	7.34			
Japan	0.50	0.91	3.30	3.42					
Germany	3.28	4.13	6.38	7.08	7.11				
BOND YIELDS									
	1M	3M	6M	1Y	2Y	3Y	5Y	10Y	30Y
UK	5.94	6.38	6.02	6.35	8.11	8.35			
US	5.38	5.75	6.55	7.01	8.80	7.34			
Japan	0.50	0.91	3.30	3.42					
Germany	3.28	4.13	6.38	7.08	7.11				
MAIN PRICE CHANGES									
	Price	Change	Price	Change	Price	Change	Price	Change	Price
Ashley (Lauria) Hides	196	39	24.8	MI Laboratories	404	19	4.5		
National Power	892	100	20.3	Yorkshire Elec Grp	861	37	4.1		
British Biotech	2805	440	18.6	Lonrho	199	8.5	4.1		

CURRENCIES									
£/\$									
	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Index	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
£/DM									
	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Index	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.20
POUND VS.									
	Close	Week's Chg	1Y Ago	Close	Week's Chg	1Y Ago	Close	Week's Chg	1Y Ago
\$ (London)	1.5177	+0.04	1.5645	\$ (London)	0.6589	-0.28	0.639		
\$ (New York)	1.5170	+0.25	1.5685	\$ (New York)	0.6592	-0.11	0.638		
DM (London)	2.2851	+1.29	2.425	DM (London)	1.5657	+0.20	1.55		
¥ (London)	162.336	-11.905	156.09	¥ (London)	106.965	-11.710	99.77		
₹ (London)	83.9	+0.3	88.5	₹ (London)	96.4	-0.4	96.1		
OTHER INDICATORS									
	Close	Week's Chg	1Y Ago	Index	Latest	1Y Ago	Next Fig		
Oil Brent \$	18.59	-2.96	18.63	RPI	151.5	+2.7	147.5	16 May	
Gold \$	390.60	-3.55	390.50	GDP	107.0	+2.0	106.1	29 Apr	
Gold £	257.36	-3.41	243.11	Base Rates	—	6.00pc	6.75	—	

IN BRIEF

• Consolidation in world telecommunications will gather pace today when Bell Atlantic and Nynex announce a £33bn merger to create America's second-largest telephone company after AT&T. The combined market capitalisation is comparable to BT and Cable & Wireless which, it emerged yesterday, have set a deadline of a month to reach agreement on their own merger. According to one report, C&W is insisting that BT first settles its feud with Don Cruickshank, the telecoms regulator.

The US merger was approved by the Bell Atlantic board on Saturday and came two months after President Bill Clinton signed a sweeping telecommunications deregulation bill. The transaction is a share swap, with Bell owning slightly more than half of the new company, which is expected to make an early push into long-distance services, especially across the Atlantic. Raymond Smith, current chairman of Bell Atlantic, will preside over the new company for one year, then making way for Ivan Seideberg, chairman of Nynex.

• Eurotunnel is to announce losses for 1995 of more than £900m, after including £200m of depreciation charges and £700m of interest on the £9bn debt. At the operating level, the tunnel was just above break-even, as revenues from rising traffic were undermined by the impact of the cross-channel price war on fares. The company has made clear it will give no progress report on talks with banks on rescheduling £8.1bn of the total debt. An outline agreement is not expected before the autumn.


• Owen Oyston, the socialist millionaire, was a last-minute financial backer of *Sunday Business*, the new weekly newspaper whose launch was in doubt until late last week. After the first issue was distributed yesterday, Tom Rubythorn, founder and editor, confirmed that Mr Oyston was involved but refused to say how much he had put in and claimed he was only one among "lots of friends" who had helped. One report said Mr Oyston had put up £1m. There were enough friends to ensure that the second issue reached the streets next Sunday, Mr Rubythorn added.

• Harrods, the Knightsbridge department store owned by the Al Fayed brothers, could be floated on the stock market for more than £1bn. The Al Fayed brothers are believed to be looking at the possibility of selling a minority stake as a result of the valuation put on Harvey Nichols, the nearby store, which is shortly to go public.

• Reuters was knocked into second place by ICV in a survey of user satisfaction with City dealing room electronic information services by Kinsey Consulting, Bloomberg, which has been second to Reuters for two years, came third. The survey also found the first increase in nine years in the number of dealing positions in the UK, which is around 27,000.

• National Express, the coach company, is tomorrow expected to be named as the winner of the competition to run the next rail line to be sold off - Midland Main Line. Earlier this month, the company won the Gatwick Express franchise and just before that it was named as the preferred bidder for Midland Main Line by franchising director Roger Salmon.

• Britain's competitiveness has been damaged because the Government has failed to reform competition policy, according to a report for the Commission on Public Policy and British Business, which includes top businessmen such as David Sainsbury and British Aerospace chairman Bob Bauman. The commission was launched last year with the endorsement of Tony Blair, the Labour leader.



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Losing the next election should tax even Labour



GAVYN DAVIES

There are reasons to think that a further rise in tactical voting is more likely than not. If it happens, the Conservatives will be in real trouble.

Some elements of the Labour Party were showing signs this weekend of embarking on the one route that could yet lead to electoral defeat: the route marked "higher taxes". A poll in the *Sunday Times* showed that a significant minority of Labour backbenchers, apparently forgetting the blindingly obvious lessons of the last four general elections, would like to levy a 50p top rate of tax at a starting income level of around £40,000. As an object lesson on how to pluck defeat out of the jaws of certain victory, this takes some beating.

Nevertheless, a study I have been doing of the psephological state of the nation shows how hard it will be for the unfashionable elements in the Labour Party to hand victory over to the Tories, however determined they may be. Psephology, it is true, took a nasty knock in the 1992 general election, and has barely since recovered. But I would offer the following five "facts" to consider, all of which suggest that the Tories face an even more difficult task than has been commonly realised if they are to be re-elected.

1. The finishing line is different for the two parties. Because of the way that the minor parties will presumably choose to vote after the election, Labour needs fewer of its own MPs than the Tories to form a government. Specifically, either side needs 326 votes in the Commons to form a government. The Conservatives can count on the support of 12 Ulster members, meaning that they need 314 seats of their own to stay in office.

Meanwhile, Labour will probably attract the support of at least 36 members of other minor parties (Liberal Democrats, Nation-

alists and the SDLP), implying that it needs only 290 seats of its own to form a government - 14 less than the Conservatives.

2. The electoral system is now skewed against the Tories. In 1992, the gap in seats between the two main parties (63) was far smaller than would have been expected, given the fact that the Tories led Labour by eight points in the popular vote across the country. Each winning Labour MP required fewer voters than each winning Tory, partly because Labour seats were smaller, and turnout was lower, and partly because the Tories piled up needlessly large majorities in many seats. This problem has been only partially redressed by the subsequent Boundary Commission changes, which will re-allocate only about six extra seats to the Tories (compared with the 20 generally expected beforehand).

If there are uniform swings in all seats across the country next time (admittedly a big if), then Labour requires a much smaller share of the popular vote to reach its finishing line target than the Tories.

In fact, if Labour obtains 36-37 per cent of the popular vote (compared with 34.4 per cent last time), it will probably be able to form a minority government. With 39 per cent of the vote, it could end up with an overall majority. Meanwhile the Conservatives need 40-41 per cent to form a minority government and 41-42 per cent to win an outright majority.

3. Regional swings seem to be favouring Labour. The arithmetic just quoted assumes uniform national swings, but this no longer happens in Britain. Nowadays, there is

great variation between regions and between different types of seats within regions. This makes it harder to translate national shares of the vote into seats, but as far as we can tell, the Tories may end up doing worse than they would with uniform swings. The Gallup 9000 poll reveals that the smallest swings to Labour since 1992 are in its areas of greatest strength - Scotland and Wales - while the greatest swings are in areas where the margins are concentrated - the North-west, the West Midlands and London. According to David Walton, of Goldman Sachs, these regional variations would add about 20 seats to the Labour total, compared with the operation of uniform national swings.

4. Tactical voting is becoming more important. Conventional wisdom at Annie's Bar in Westminster is that tactical voting is significant only in by-elections. Not so. According to an excellent analysis by John Currice

and Michael Steed in the Nuffield study of the 1992 election, there has been a creeping tendency for tactical voting to spread in key seats for at least two general elections. Last time, this particularly helped Labour in two-party marginals versus the Conservatives, since in these seats there was a disproportionate squeeze on the Liberal Democrat vote. The swing to Labour in such marginals was 1-2 per cent greater than in the rest of the country - which may not sound much, but which probably delivered a handful of otherwise unwinnable seats to Labour.

Nobody can say whether tactical voting will be even more significant next time. Certainly, the change in constituency boundaries will make tactical voting more problematic. But with the national relationship between Labour and Liberal Democrat parties much warmer than before, and with Labour breathing down the necks of Tory incumbents in many more seats, especially in the south of England, there are reasons to think that a further rise in tactical voting is more likely than not. If it happens, the Conservatives will be in real trouble.

5. The polls may be wrong, but they cannot be that wrong. Neither John Major nor Tony Blair is choosing to believe the present opinion poll results - the first to avoid despair, the second to avoid complacency. Both are inclined to believe that much of the Labour lead is illusory, and that there may still be some lying in responses to the pollsters. But how much of the Labour lead can these factors really account for? The final opinion polls before the 1992 election

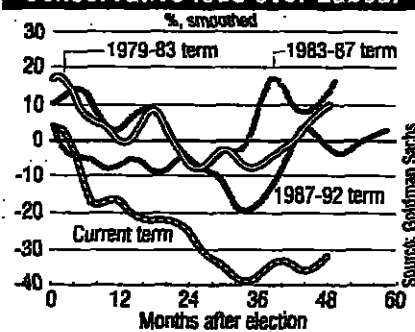
showed the likely result as a dead heat: the exit polls on the day showed a four-point Labour lead; and the actual result was an eight-point point win for the Government. According to Peter Kellner, three points of the eight-point polling error were due to a late swing and to differential turnout, which may go either way next time. A further two to three points were due to sampling error (uncovering too few Tory voters in remote rural areas, etc), a problem that should now have been eliminated. This leaves about two to three points for lying to the pollsters. Even if this is still happening, which is uncertain, it is a drop in the bucket compared with the 30-point Labour lead shown in recent opinion polls.

As the graph shows, the opposition lead is not only much larger than it was in previous parliaments, but it has persisted for much longer than ever before. And one final war game shows how difficult the Government's task now is. About a year before the 1992 election, the polls showed Labour roughly eight points ahead, while on election day the Tories won by the same amount. Hence the sum of polling error and the final year swing back to the Government was equivalent to 16 points.

It would need twice this swing back to the Government in the next 12 months for John Major to win again.

The arithmetic, therefore, looks daunting for the Tories. But the tax-raising minority of Labour backbenchers may still be sufficiently obtuse to engineer a shock defeat for their party. With enemies like these, Mr Major must be thinking, who needs friends?

Conservative lead over Labour



A year ago the Pru's reputation was taking a battering. Now the insurer is riding high. Its chief executive talked to Nic Cicutti

A change of strategy for changing times



Peter Davis: A sudden decision Photograph: David Sandison

What a difference a year makes. Barely 12 months ago, the Prudential risked becoming one of the most unpopular insurers in Britain.

Under its former chief executive, Mick Newmarch, the company faced widespread scepticism as it doggedly denied suggestions that its salesforce was in any way implicated in the pension transfer scandal.

Mr Newmarch, doughty and well respected, had become identified with a tough, no-nonsense approach which initially irritated and later infuriated both Government and financial regulators.

His sudden departure 13 months ago against a background of insider dealing allegations, later proved to be completely untrue, marked a new low for Prudential.

Then came Peter Davis, who professes himself slightly surprised by his appointment. A former chief executive at Reed, his previous experience lay

largely in the supermarkets sector, most recently a 10-year stint ("good years", he says) at J Sainsbury. After his departure from Reed, he was asked to join the Pru board in 1994.

Mr Newmarch's shock departure meant a sudden decision for Mr Davis himself: "I was about to do something else and had committed myself elsewhere. I was on the nominations committee because I was not a candidate. They met without me and Sir Martin Jacobme, the chairman, said, 'We actually think you should do it'. So I then had to extricate myself from the other commitment."

Today, the company is riding high. In March, barely a year after his appointment as Prudential group chief executive, the company reported record operating profits of £804m.

Last week, the Pru announced a 12 per cent increase in worldwide premium income for the first three months of the year, up to £1.6bn. In the UK,

where the company's problems were particularly acute, sales of single premium products were up 34 per cent to £866m, the highest quarterly total for more than two years.

It would be easy to deduce from this that Mr Davis is solely responsible for the rapid turnaround in the fortunes of the Pru.

In fact, Mr Davis is quick to point out that the past year's successes are not down to him alone: "I can't claim any credit for them. The real improvement in profit came out of the US, because of actions that Mick Newmarch took in '92 and '93 to change the way the companies were run and change the management. This is a very long-term business."

Certainly, there have been changes since Mr Davis was ap-

pointed in March last year. One of them has been the more eminent approach by the Pru towards the issue of industry regulation.

Another noticeable difference is in the company's medium-term strategy. Mr Davis believes that the UK provides the Prudential with one of the biggest challenges - and opportunities - it is likely to face over the next few years. "There is a growing tendency towards convergence, where the banks, building societies and life companies are coming together. Banks are buying building societies, building societies are opening life companies."

"In the next five years, I think we will see the emergence of six or seven major retail consumer financial players and I want the Prudential to be

among them." This view of the changing face of the UK financial services industry led Prudential to announce it will launch its own telephone-based banking service later this year.

As a first step, Prudential will bring under its roof the £700m-plus of mortgages it arranges each year.

It also wants to retain a significant proportion of the £1bn paid out annually on its maturing policies through other lenders, enticing them into deposit-style accounts.

Even so, Mr Davis notes that the pace of change is accelerating. Hence Prudential's stated wish to acquire either a building society or a UK life company. "We are going to find ourselves competing with much larger organisations who will have an integrated product range, from banking right through to life products."

Mr Davis refuses to be drawn on the Prudential's takeover preferences: "The balance is in

favour of a life company but we are also studying whether we would achieve our objectives as well, or better, through a building society."

Positioning the Prudential for the changes taking place within the UK industry also means taking on board the issues that affect its work in the next few years. Foremost among them has been the regulation and downturn in sales after the pension mis-selling problem exploded in 1993.

Despite the recent fall-off in sales, people will sooner or later be forced to return to the subject of personal pensions, Mr Davis argues. "I would be surprised if occupational pensions schemes continue in quite the same way. Many companies have been able to take a holiday from contributions because of surpluses created by good equity markets in the eighties and the reduction of workforces. I don't believe that is going to continue forever."

THE MONDAY INTERVIEW

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SCIENCE

Encounter with a distant stranger

Before Pluto retreats from Earth on its 240-year circuit of the Sun, scientists are desperate to uncover its secrets. **Peter Bond reports**

Which is the farthest planet from the Sun? Although the answer given by all the textbooks is Pluto, this is not entirely true. For 20 years, during each 240-year circuit around the Sun, Pluto slips inside the orbit of Neptune and becomes the eighth planet from the Sun. This rare episode will come to an end in 1999, when Pluto will regain its status as the planetary outpost of the Solar System.

Such orbital idiosyncrasy is of great significance for scientists hoping to learn more about this peculiar world. At present, Pluto is relatively close, about 4.5bn kilometres from the Sun. However, its orbit is highly elliptical so that by the year 2113 it will have drifted out to almost 7.5bn kilometres – an increase of two-thirds in distance.

As if this remoteness was not enough, astronomers also have to contend with Pluto's tiny size. Just 2,300km across, Pluto is much smaller than our Moon. Not surprisingly, astronomers have struggled to piece together a coherent picture of

this enigmatic object since its discovery in 1930. Another 48 years went by before the discovery of its moon, Charon.

Before the planet retreats into the depths of space and once more becomes a bleak frozen ice ball, Nasa, the US space agency, is desperately attempting to put together a spacecraft reconnaissance mission. The current plan, dubbed Pluto Express, is to send two small spacecraft to the Pluto-Charon system. As both objects rotate once every 6.4 days, the second craft, targeted to arrive 3.2 days after the first, would be able to survey regions hidden in darkness during the initial approach.

In the Eighties, when Charon and Pluto began a series of mutual eclipses, astronomers were able to piece together the first maps of surface brightness. Evidence emerged of brighter polar regions, possibly covered in frost. Then, in 1988, came the revelation that Pluto had a thin atmosphere, probably composed of nitrogen or methane. The latest breakthrough has

been provided by the Hubble Space Telescope. From its advantageous viewpoint above Earth's turbulent atmosphere, pictures taken with European Space Agency's Faint Object Camera have observed details on the surface for the first time.

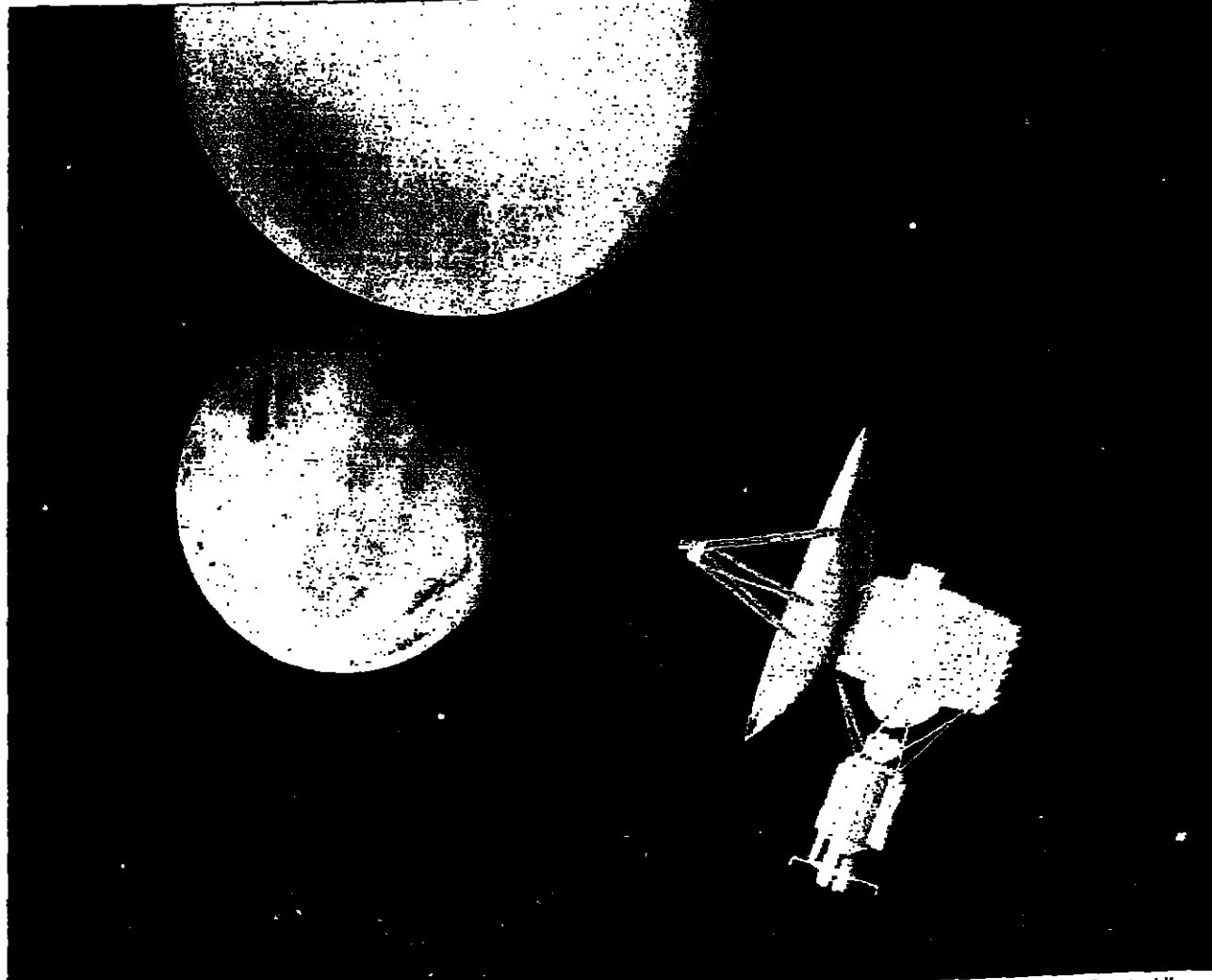
After computer processing, Hubble's snapshots, taken during one complete Plutonian rotation, reveal major variations in brightness across the entire planet. "I don't know anything in the outer Solar System that looks like this complex," says team member Dr. Alan Stern, of Southwest Research Institute in Boulder, Colorado. Apart from the previously known bright polar regions, the images show a "ragged" north polar cap bisected by a dark strip, a bright spot seen rotating with the planet, a cluster of dark spots and a bright linear marking.

Speculation is rife over what these markings might represent. Some may be topographic features such as basins and fresh craters. The most favoured explanation is dra-

matic seasonal changes resulting from Pluto's orbit. During the 200-year-long winter, gases freeze and settle on to the icy wastes. When the short warm season returns, these frosts probably turn back into a gas. As a result, some regions are bright like new snow while others resemble dirty snow. The brighter deposits are probably nitrogen frost deposited during the past few decades, while the grey areas may be coated in residues of hydrocarbons, where ultraviolet sunlight and cosmic rays have chemically altered the methane frost.

At present, Pluto is enjoying its short summer break. As the dirty ices are evaporated, the thin atmosphere swells and evolves. All too soon the winter will return and the gases will freeze out once more, forming a fresh, frosty coating.

Despite public support from the Nasa director, Dan Goldin, Pluto Express scientists at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, are affected by the financial constraints on all space activities.



Pluto Express: Nasa wants to send two spacecraft to Pluto (top) and its moon, Charon

Nasa/Science Photo Library

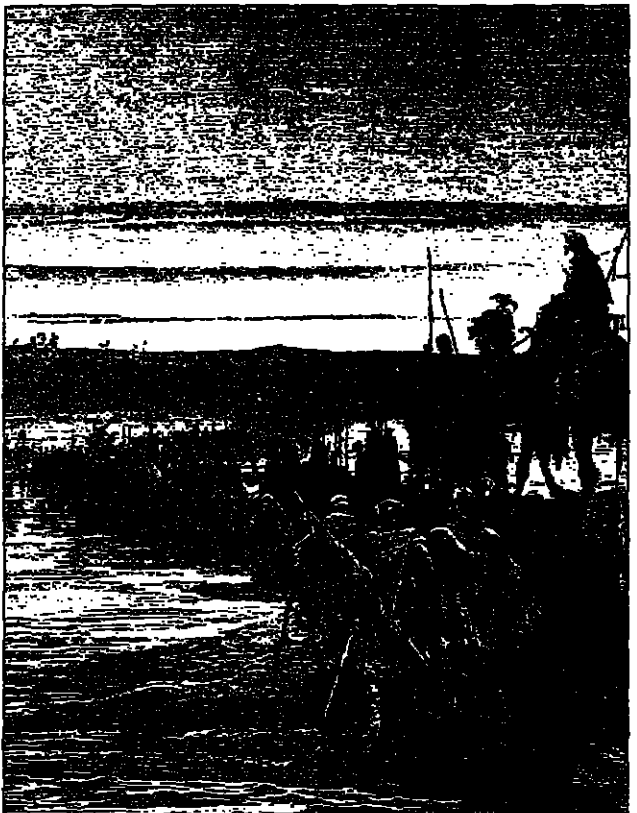
The challenge is to present a plan that could be given the go-ahead by Congress in 1998 or 1999, allowing the launches to proceed in 2001, with Pluto flybys in 2012-2013. Current estimates put the cost of such a mission at around \$300m.

In order to achieve this, plan-

ners are hoping to use lower-cost Russian rockets to boost the craft on their way. The spacecraft themselves will weigh no more than 100kg (220lb) yet have sufficient computer power to probe the planet in the visible, infrared, ultraviolet and radio regions of the electromagnetic spectrum.

According to the Pluto Express preproject manager, Robert Staehle, both Pluto and Charon could be mapped with a global resolution of around 1km, with spot coverage revealing features as small as 100 metres across. Does America still have the vision and purpose to grasp this

rare opportunity? If Pluto Express remains grounded, several lifetimes will pass before a similar mission can be launched. The last time Pluto was this close to the Sun, King George II was on the throne and Britain still ruled the American colonies.



The Israelites: what was 'manna from Heaven'? Hulton Getty

The beetle cocoon that was manna for Moses

Molecule of the month: John Emsley looks at trehalose

Passover, the religious festival celebrated by Jews this month, commemorates the night when the Angel of Death spared the Israelites but killed the first-born of their Egyptian masters. The disaster persuaded the Egyptians to release their slaves, and so began their 40 years in the wilderness. Within a few weeks the Israelites were starving, so Moses appealed to God, who promised: "I will rain down bread from Heaven for you". (Exodus 16) and delivered the mysterious, but nutritious, manna which was "white like coriander seed and tasted like a wafer made with honey".

This Heaven-sent sweetness might again be saving lives – thanks to a British company. Manna was almost certainly trehalose, a white crystalline carbohydrate made of two glucose molecules joined together. It is one of very few naturally occurring molecules that taste sweet, although it is only half as

sweet as sugar. What the Israelites were gathering was the cocoon of the parasitic beetle *Trehala manna* from which trehalose gets its name, and which explains Moses' warning not to hoard it: "Some, however, did not listen... and it became full of maggots and stank." The cocoons, found on thorn bushes in the Middle East, are highly nutritious, consisting of 30 per cent trehalose plus protein.

Trehalose occurs in honey, bread, beer, wine and vinegar, while Japanese shiitake mushrooms and baker's yeast contain as much as 20 per cent. Trehalose has remarkable preserving power and is produced by creatures that lie dormant under drought conditions. Some plants can lose over 95 per cent of their water content and still survive, thanks to the trehalose in their cells.

John Crowe, of the Univer-

sity of California at Davis, suggested that trehalose has the right shape to replace water molecules around vital cell proteins and prevent them from collapsing. Michael Burke, of Oregon State University, believes that trehalose forms a supportive "glass" like that of boiled sweets within tissues.

Steve King, of the Institute of Food Research at Norwich, has shown that small amounts of protein are needed to keep trehalose glass stable at 37°C and prevent it becoming opaque and microcrystalline. Trehalose is now being used

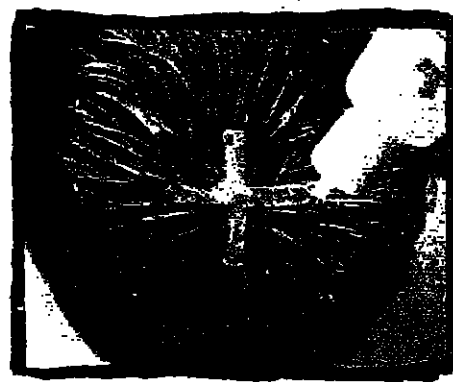
as a preservative for antibodies, vaccines, enzymes and blood coagulation factors. In 1985, Bruce Roser discovered that if trehalose was added to solutions of proteins like these, which were then dehydrated, the products could be stored at temperatures above 40°C and when rehydrated were still active. This offers an alternative way of preserving medical supplies in Third World countries, where 90 per cent of vaccines are wasted through lack of refrigeration facilities. Mr Roser has set up his own company, Quadrant, at Cambridge, to exploit his dis-

covery, and employs 30 people. "After years of storage at room temperature, trehalose-dried antibodies worked well. Even notoriously unstable enzymes, such as DNA-modifying and restriction enzymes, worked after being stored for a month at 70°C," says Mr Roser. Another use could be to store blood. "Fresh blood has a shelf life of 42 days, after which it must be disposed of. Trehalose-dried blood could mean an end to the critical blood shortages that are suffered by the health service."

Quadrant imports its trehalose from Japan. Production

is set to increase to 50 tons a month. Scientists there have shown that trehalose preserves the quality and flavour of dried foods. Many people find that powdered egg has an unpleasant taste, but if it is dehydrated with trehalose it takes on the taste of fresh egg. Other foods, such as powdered puree of bananas, mangoes, apples and avocados, also rehydrate with the taste of the fresh fruit. The method used to dry trehalose-treated foods is much cheaper than the normal methods of vacuum-drying and freeze-drying.

John Emsley is science writer in residence at Imperial College, London.



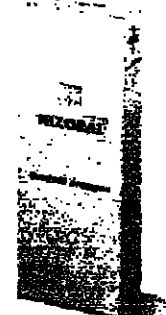
To many this concept would sound melodramatic. Not to us. Only dandruff sufferers know what a heavy cross this condition is to bear. An itchy, flaky scalp will not only cause physical distress, it can undermine your confidence, too. Our research taught us that dandruff is caused by a microbe. A medical condition demanding a reliable medical solution – First Aid.

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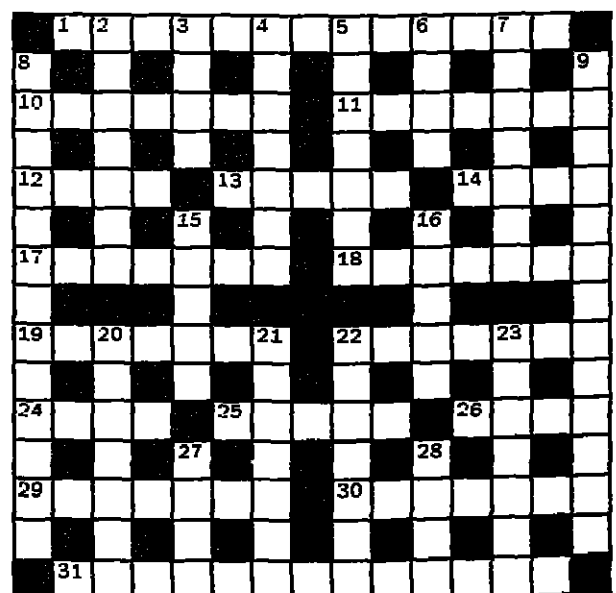
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By Porcia



- ACROSS**
- Prepared with true mango it's delicious (5-8)
 - Communication system that's all the rage? (3,4)
 - Publicity results in increase (5-2)
 - Meagre list (4)
 - Head off unpleasant type of creature (5)
 - Change track to come back North (4)
 - Control number joining exercise class (7)
 - Rough sort of player (7)
 - Certain to conceal age of celebrity (7)
 - Guy's excited about foot soldiers (7)
 - It's grasped by one on guard (4)
 - Isolated house – sounds spooky (5)
 - Short of news (4)
 - Tear out design for old clothes (7)
 - Cap is decorated with fly-er's crest (7)

- DOWN**
- Check on sweet-scented flower and find new life (13)
 - American force is implicated in fantastic scandal (7)
 - Narrow part of path I negotiate (4)
 - Struggle with remainder of French article (7)
 - Battle to recycle square blocks (7)
 - Russian leader has trouble with transport (4)
 - Surely question refusal given at first (2,5)
 - Anyway, hair has stolen biggest part (3,5,5)
 - Give callers a chance? (4,3,4,2)
 - Standard musical work (5)
 - Charge for catching river fish (5)
 - Uneasy feeling South East Asians expressed (7)
 - Chosen artist to depict Greek girl (7)
 - Decree several be taken down (7)
 - Meet Nick on time at job-centre (3,4)
 - Modern name for an inert gas (4)
 - Point to narrow bit of land (4)

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